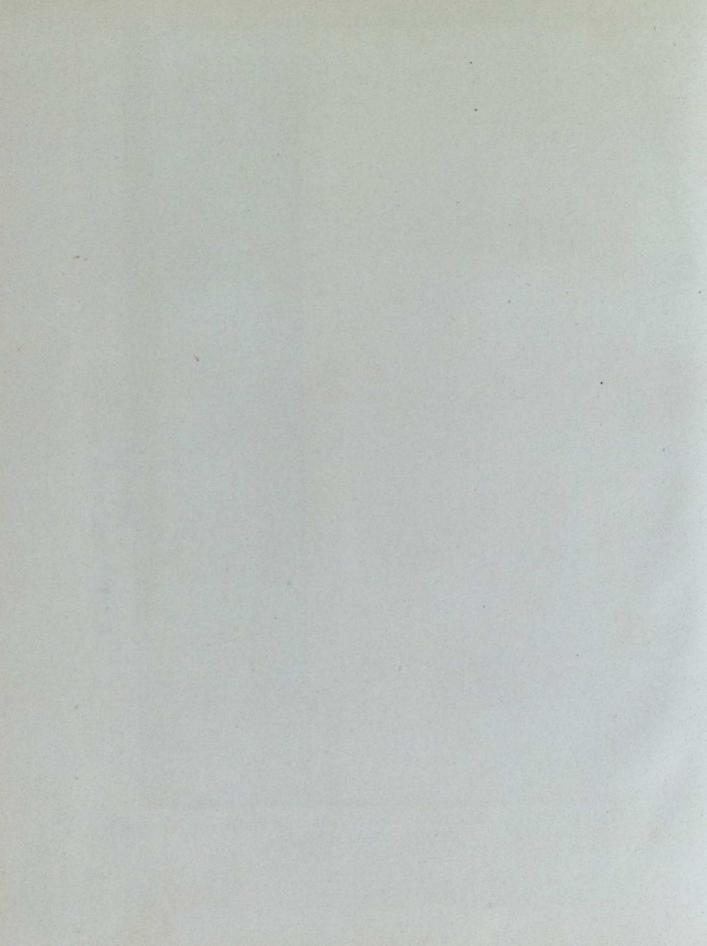
RISHIS IN INDIAN ART AND LITERATURE

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C. SIVARAMAMURTI





RISHIS IN INDIAN ART AND LITERATURE 72-3

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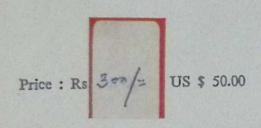


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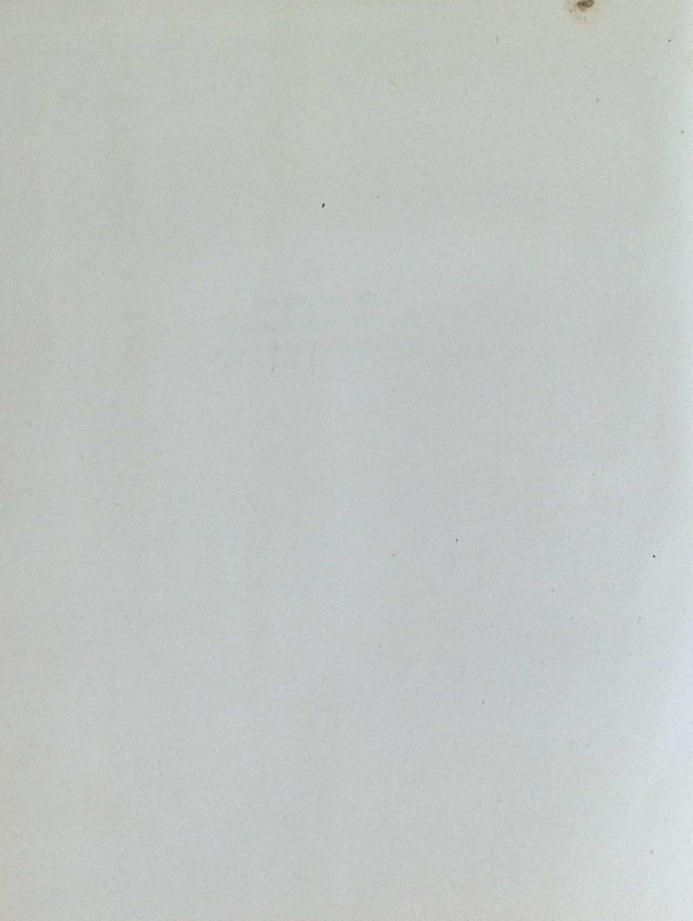
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First Published: 1981



ToNo Colaganathan
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To
the memory of
Dr. T.N. Ramachandran
with affection and esteem



FOREWORD

It is a pleasure and privilege to write a foreword to this sumptuously produced volume on our Rishis as portrayed in Art and Literature.

When I first came into contact with Chi* Sivaramamurti in 1930, it was in his role as the aapta sishya of my most erudite and esteemed colleague, Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswami Sastri. Then as now C.S. revelled in the beauties of Sanskrit poetry and in the lines and colours and contours of sculptures and paintings. While the years have added immensely to his knowledge, they could take nothing away from his exuberance and enthusiasm.

Bharat is what she is because of the Rishis. Like any of her major rivers, Ganga, Narmada or Kaveri, the line of the Rishis seems to be a perennially flowing stream enriching the mind and imagination of her common people. If in recent times, singers, saints and seers like Tagore, Bharati, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana, struck responsive chords in millions of human hearts, it was because neither the intellectuals nor the masses would willingly let this great tradition die.

There is no dimension of India's life — be it philosophy or science, drama or poetry, sculpture or architecture, literature or law — that has not been shaped and illumined by the loving labours of her Rishis. They in their turn have been deified and glorified in poems, paintings and statues so that their names and stories and teachings have passed into myths which form the stuff of all living traditions.

For handling this absorbing theme there could hardly be anyone better fitted than C.S. who belongs to this tradition, having been born

^{*}Abbreviation of Chiranjīvī, a blessing for long life.

in it and having spent a whole lifetime in expounding it at home and abroad and in illustrating it with his own telling line-sketches as well as through wisely chosen photographs of sculptures.

The illustrations in this volume span the centuries from the second B.C. to the eighteenth A.D., while the pen-portraits provide an anthology of poets showering flowery praises on Rishis—Valmiki and Bana on Agastya, Kalidas on Kashyapa, Bhavabhuti on Valmiki, and so on, in a never-ending garland of delight.

Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi New Delhi-22. 31-7-81 K. Swaminathan

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

When I was at Madras in 1979 as Visiting Professor of Art in the Madras University, I was invited by Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu, to deliver the Dr. T.N. Ramachandran Memorial Lectures on the 23rd and 24th April 1979. The theme chosen by me for this talk 'Rishis in Indian Art and Literature' was so fascinating that I later considerably expanded it, in which form it now appears in this book. I am thankful to Dr. Nagaswamy for enabling me to pay my respect to the memory of a great scholar from a galaxy that includes Mahāmahopādhyaya A. Chinnaswami Sastri, Kalāprapūrna S.T.G. Varadachari, Dr. P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Professor P.P.S. Sastri, Dr. Kunhan Raja, Dr. A. Sankaran, Dr. T.R. Chintamani, Dr. V. Raghavan and others produced by the stupendous learning and versatile genius of our beloved Professor Mahā-Vidyāvāchaspati Kulapati Darśanakalānidhi mahopādhyāya Kuppuswami Sastri whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year. At the instance of our beloved Professor who noticed my zeal for a comparative study of Indian Art and Sanskrit Literature I was invited by Dr. Ramachandran to take to the field of Art and Archaeology where I have engaged myself fruitfully for a lifetime. I feel it a great privilege and joy to express my keen sense of gratitude to Dr. Ramachandrap. It is unnecessary to repeat that if India can be proud of an outstanding culture it is what it has derived from the simple Rishis of the noblest thought and highest ethical calibre.

Dr. Nagaswamy readily agreed to the lectures being published in their present enlarged form in a manner worthy of the theme as a well produced book fully illustrated and documented. To Shri Jayant Baxi of the Kanak Publications goes the credit for producing the book with aesthetic taste. To the Archaeological Survey, the National Museum, Madras Museum, Chandigarh Museum, Lucknow Museum, Mathura Museum, Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum, Prince of Wales Museum, Cleveland Museum,

I express my sincere thanks for helping with photos for illustrating the book. Some of the monochrome blocks were kindly lent by Shri Shakti Malik of Abhinav Publications. The colour plate blocks were very kindly lent by the National Museum to enhance the charm and utility of the book for which I am most beholden to both.

As I thank the printers, I cannot help feeling so sad on the demise of Shri Chhotelal Jain of the Navchetan Press who took infinite interest in the printing of the plates. My thanks are also due to the Shahend Press for speedily printing the text carefully avoiding errors. The index was prepared with special care by Shri. G.S. Bagga to whom I offer my best thanks.

The Foreword has been written by Professor K. Swaminathan, the saintly scholar reputed as the Indian Pandit in English, who ever showered his affection on me from my student days in the Presidency College at Madras, and who, now, as Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, though exceedingly overworked, has found the time to go through the book and offer his blessings as his Foreword. I treasure it and am unable to adequately thank him for it.

C. Sivaramamurti

New Delhi 31st July 1981

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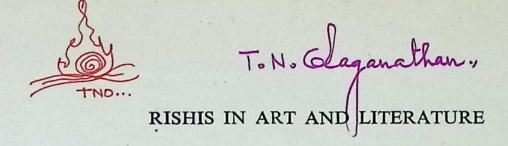
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Fig. 79. Sudāmá Lovingly welcomed by Krishņa, late Chera, 18th Century A.D., Trichūr





The rishis or the sages have been rightly valued in India as supreme. They are even beyond the celestials. They set an example of life itself. How to live is to be learnt by following the way of the sage. Sages are the embodiment of not only learning but the highest of self-control, sacrifice, supreme understanding, childlike innocence, universal love, a feeling of utmost goodwill for the entire world, animals and birds, trees and creepers, lakes, streams and rivers, hills and dales, rocks and hillocks included. The highest seers could see beyond the ordinary ken of mortals, but yet, were the very embodiment of simplicity, the highest acme of contentment, viewing alike everything on earth, nothing so high as to overawe them, neither so low as to be despised.

That is why the *Upanishad* describes the *rishi* as the highest even among the *vipras*: ऋषिवित्राणाम् *Mahānārāyaṇopanishad* 12.1. When we remember how important *vipra* himself is, from the definition, that one born of a Brāhmaṇa family, and become a *dvija* (twice-born) by sacred ceremonies (saṃskāra), namely, upanayana that gives him the status of a brahmachārin worthy of the study of the Veda, and profound by the study and understanding of the Veda itself with its six limbs, the shaḍaṅgas, i.e. śikshā, vyākaraṇa, chhandas, nirukta, kalpa and jyotisha and the highest study that leads on to moksha dharma which is Parāvidyā, the final stage which makes one a vipra, it is seen why the unit chosen is vipra:

जन्मना ब्राह्मणो प्रोक्तः संस्कारैद्विज उच्यते। विद्यया याति विप्रत्वं त्रिभिः श्रोत्रिय उच्यते॥

Thus it can be observed that one satisfying the three conditions and reaching the stage of vipra automatically is a strotriya. A strotriya is one who is deeply versed in the Veda. Even among these vipras of whom the highest is the srotriya, the rishi is the noblest: rishir viprāṇām, as the one enlightened by the Veda and ennobled by tapas or penance.

This concept of the *rishi* is thus a theme reckoned high even in the earliest Vedic hymns. The idea of the seven *rishis* is already familiar in the *Rigveda* where they are conceived as our fathers:

अस्माकमत्र पितरस्त आसन् सप्त ऋषयः।

Rigveda 4, 42, 8.

They are enumerated as the seven sacrificial priests hotri, potri, neshtri, agnidhri, praśāstri, adhvaryu, brahmā, respectively invoker, purifier, leader, kindler, director, ministering priest and praying priest:

तवाग्ने होत्रं तव पोत्रं ऋत्वियं तव नेष्ट्रं त्वं अग्निदृतायतः। तव प्रशास्त्रं त्वमध्वरीयसि ब्रह्मा चासि गृहपतिश्च नो दमे।।

Rigveda 2, 1, 2.

and this is continued thereafter:

सप्त जिह्वाः सप्त ऋषयः सप्त घाम प्रियाणि ।

Taittirīya Samhitā 1,5,3.

They are individually mentioned sometimes and, also collectively in the plural, as denoting whole families as Bhṛigus, Angirasas, Atris and so forth. These two are Gautama and Bharadvāja. These are indeed Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni collectively and individually. These two are Vasishṭha and Kaśyapa. This is Atri like the tongue that eats food:

इमावेव गोतमभरद्वाजौ, अयमेय गौतमः, अयं भरद्वाजः, इमावेव विश्वामित्रजमदग्नी, अयमेव विश्वामित्रः, अयं जमदिग्नः, इमावेव विस्टिकश्यपौ, अयमेव विस्टिः, अयं कश्यपः, वागेवात्रिः, वाचा ह्यन्नमद्यते ।

Brihadāranyakopanishad 2, 2, 4.

The rishis transformed into stars as known to later myth are known so in the Vedic legend as well. They are rikshas, stars, apart from being the rishis like सप्तिषपु ह सम वे पुरावक्षी इत्याचक्षते Satapatha Brāhmaṇa 2, 1, 2, 4. That is why Kālidāsa refers to rishis invited that assembled for Rāma's aśvamedha not only from the ends of the earth but also from the luminous spheres:

दिग्भ्यो निमन्त्रिताश्चैनमभिजग्मुर्महर्षयः । न भौमान्येव घिष्ण्यानि हित्वा ज्योतिर्मयान्यपि ॥

Raghuvamśa 15, 59.

The rise of the star Agastya clears the turbid waters:

प्रससादोदयादम्भः कुम्भयोनेर्महौजसः ।

Raghuvamśa 4, 21.

On this Mallinātha comments agastyodaye jalāni prasīdanti ityāgamaķ.

Arundhatī, the consort of Vasishtha, who is more famous in the epic and Purāṇic literature, though also known to the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 3.9.2., is the only one who takes a place with the principal seers; and an Eastern Chāļukya frieze of the Saptarishis from the Bhīmeśvara temple at Drākshārama (Fig. 1) represents her along with them. She is a star like the seven rishis as mentioned in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. It is no wonder Bhavabhūti makes his own obeisance to her through the mouth of Janaka by making him describe her as he bows to her as the very auspiciousness of the three worlds, adorable to the universe like the goddess of dawn heralding light, by whom even the treasure of all holy lustre and preceptor of all the preceptors, Vasishtha, considers himself purified:

यया पूर्तमन्यो निधिरिप पिवत्रस्य महसः पितस्ते पूर्वेषामिप खलु गुरूणां गुरुतमः। त्रिलोकीमङ्गल्यामविनतललीनेन शिरसा जगद्दन्द्यां देवीमुषसमिव वन्दे भगवतीम्।।

Uttararāmacharita 4.10.

Though Atri's saintly wife, who has representation in a Gupta panel from Deogarh (Fig. 2), where she presents Sītā with divine toiletry, dress and ornaments in appreciation of her pātivratya, is not known in Vedic hymns, Lopāmudrā, however, as the consort of Agastya, is known to the Rigveda where there is an explicit dialogue between her and Agastya in a hymn. She laments that she had up to the point of fatigue attended on Agastya for many autumns, nights, days and dawns: age was diminishing her great beauty and women naturally desire the favour of the passion of their spouse:

पूर्वीरहं शरदः शश्रमाणा दोषा वस्तोरुषसो जरयन्तीः। मिनाति श्रियं जरिमा तनूनामप्यू नु पत्नीर्वृषणो जगम्युः।।

Rigveda 1.179.1.

And Agastya now confesses that even on him, lost in meditation, had come passion somehow. Lopāmudrā, shy and timid, shall fully enjoy my passion, though I am normally unmoved by thoughts of love:

नदस्य मा रुघतः काम आगान्नित आजातो अमुतः कुतश्चित्। लोपामुद्रा वृषणां नी ऋणाति धीरमधीरा धयति श्वसन्तम्।। Rigveda 1.179.4.

Agastya as a true sage of potency thus fostered both penance and love, dug deep at penance and desired equally for powerful progeny, and through the grace of the gods obtained the fruition of his prayer:

अगस्त्यः खनमानः खनित्रैः प्रजामपत्यं बलमिच्छमानः। उभौ वर्णावृषिरुग्नः पुपोष सत्या देवेष्वाशिषो जगाम।।

Rigveda 1.179.6.

The rishis as seen from the above, are often equated with the celestials, and taken with the later as ever intent on the welfare of the world as Bhavabhūti puts it:

सर्वथा ऋषयो देवताश्च श्रेयो विधास्यन्ति ।

Uttararāmacharita 1.

Along with gods like Agni or Yama, the ancient seers are invoked with the sweetest honeyed oblation. Obeisance is offered to the sages born ever so early, the ancient directors of the right path:

यमाय मधुमत्तमं राज्ञे हव्यं जुहोतन । इदं मम ऋषिम्यः पूर्वजेम्यः पथिकृद्भ्यः ॥

Rigveda 10.14.15.

Several of the *rishis* are themselves conceived as celestials, as for example, Brihaspati who is placed at the head of even the most ancient seers. He occupies three seats with the three fires — connected with Agni — Angiras — who propped apart the ends of the earth by his clear voice, the charming-tongued, that the ancient seers after deep deliberation placed as the foremost among them:

यस्तस्तम्भ सहसा व ज्मो अन्तान् वृहस्पितस्तृषधस्तो रवेण। तं प्रत्नास ऋषयो दीध्यानाः पुरो विप्रा दिधरे मन्द्रजिह्नम्।। Rigveda 4.50.1. Similarly Agni, one of the foremost principal gods of the Rigveda, next only to Indra in importance, is conceived as a rishi, a domestic priest, purohita, officiating priest, ritvik, adored by seers, the most ancient and recent:

अग्निमीले पुरोहितम् । यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् । अग्निः पूर्वेभिऋषिभिरीड्यो नूतनैरुत । स देवाँ एह वक्षति ।

Rigveda 1.1.1-2.

Though a god come with the celestials, देवो देवेभिरागमत् Rigveda 1.1.5, he is still so close to the humans as a rishi that he is easy of access like a father to his son and abides with them for their good:

स नः पितेव सूनवे । अग्ने सूपायनो भव । सचस्वा नः स्वस्तये ।

Rigveda 1.1.9.

Bhrigu so named after the root bhrāj to shine is almost divine and is closely associated with Agni like Angiras, being born of the sacrificial fire of Varuna:

वरुणस्य ऋतौ जातः पावकादिति नः श्रुतम् ।

Mahābhārata 1.5.8.

Like Angiras who is identified with Agni,

यदङ्ग दाशुषे त्वं, अग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत्तत् सत्यं अङ्गिरः ।

Rigveda 1.1.6,

and as in the epic myth, Angiras is made the first son of Agni, Bhrigu also is made the son of Varuna even in Vedic mythology and has the patronymic Vāruni:

भृगुर्वे वारुणिः, वरुएां पितरमुपससार।

Taittirīyopanishad 3.1.1.

This is so in the Satapatha Brāhmana 11.1.1 and Aitareya Brāhmana 3.34 as well.

The story in the Mahābhārata makes Angiras so lustrous by his penance excelling Agni,

पुराङ्गिरा महाबाहो चचार तप उत्तमम्। आश्रमस्थो महाभागो हब्यवाहं विशेषयन्।।

Mahābhārata 3.217.8,

that Agni himself asks him to function as fire. Agni says

निक्षिपाम्यहमग्नित्वं त्वमग्निः प्रथमो भव।

Mahābhārata 3.217.16.,

but the sage being fair and true, prayed of Agni to be the real fire dispelling darkness by his blaze (Fig. 3 and 4), and he would be his chosen adopted son:

कुरु पुण्यं प्रजास्वर्ग्यं भवाग्निस्तिमिरापहः। मां च देव कुरुष्वाग्ने प्रथमं पुत्रमञ्जसा।। श्रुत्वा चाङ्गिरसो वाक्यं जातवेदास्तथाकरोत्। राजन् बृहस्पतिर्नाम तस्याप्यङ्गिरसः सुतः॥

Mahābhārata 3.217, 16-18.

Even Kasyapa is associated with Agni and Śraddhā as a son to father and mother:

पिता यत्कश्यपस्याग्निः श्रद्धा माता मनुः कविः ।

Sāmaveda 1.1.2.4.10.

Bhrigu is the first to receive Agni. Fire brought to Bhrigu by Mātariśvā is mentioned in a hymn to Agni. The carrier of oblations, famed, banner of sacrifice, kindly protector, messenger of the gods, instant fulfiller, born of two arani sticks, as it were a great treasure ever so precious, a great domestic priestly friend for sage Bhrigu was brought by the wind god Mātariśvan:

विह्न यशसं विदथस्य केतुं सुप्राव्यं दूतं सद्योअर्थम् । द्विजन्मानं रियमिव प्रशस्तं राति भरद्भगवे मातरिश्वा ॥

Rigveda 1.60.1.

But the legend in the epic makes Bhrigu hastily curse Agni for speaking the truth about the justice in the marital relationship of the sage and his wife Pulomā on being questioned by the rākshasa Puloma, It was the bare truth that, originally promised to Puloma by her father, she was later lawfully wedded to the great sage and she was rightfully his wife as Agni put it:

अथेमां वेददृष्टेन कर्मणा विधिपूर्वकम् । भार्या ऋषिम् गुः प्राप्य मां पुरस्कृत्य दानव ॥

Mahābhārata 1.5.33.

As she was forcibly taken away from the hermitage by the demon,

the child in her womb, shining in lustre, slipped out, reduced him to ashes, and saved his mother. This is the famous sage Chyavana, who could so act even as he emerged as a child from the mother's womb:

रोषान्मातुरच्युतः कुक्षेरच्यवनस्तेन सोऽभवत्।

Mahābhārata 1.6.2.

Bhrigu's curse that Agni should be sarvabhaksha eat-all, was, however, partially revoked by Brahmā to appease Agni, that refused to function for the gods and manes carrying svāhā or svadhā oblations in sacrifices, made him pure and holy, Suchi and Pāvaka, being sarvabhaksha only in his Kravyāda corpseburning aspect:

> क्रव्यादा च तनुर्या ते सा सर्वं भक्षयिष्यति । यथा सूर्याशुभिः स्पृष्टं सर्वं शुचि भविष्यति ।। तथा त्वदर्चिनिर्दंग्धं सर्वं शुचि भविष्यति । ... अग्निश्च परमां प्रीतिमवाप हृतकल्मषः ।।

> > Mahābhārata 1.7.23-24,28.

Not a whit less than his father Chyavana was Aurva who was born of Arushī daughter of Manu, like another son Pramati born of Sukanyā daughter of Śaryāti whose son was Ruru. Sukanyā is known as the daughter of Śaryāti and wife of Chyavana even in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

स रथं युक्त्वा, सुकन्यां शार्यांतीं उपधाय प्रसिष्यन्द स आजगाम यत्रिषरास तत्। स होवाय । ऋषे नमस्ते यन्नावेदिषं तेनाहिंसिषम् । इयं सुकन्या तया तेऽप्रह्नवे ।

Śatapatha Brāhmana 4.1.5.6;10, 13:

He yoked the chariot and with Sukanyā Śāryātī (daughter of Śaryāti) he went to where the *rishi* was stationed. He said, Salutation Oh sage! unknowingly was this pain caused to you. This is my daughter Sukanyā. By offering her I expiate the wrong I did. The line of Bhrigu, according to the *Matsyapurāṇa* and correctly so answered in the *pravara*, has Āpnavāna as son of Chyavana and father of Aurva. Aurva was born miraculously from the thigh of his mother and hence his name:

और्वस्तस्यां समभवदूरुं भित्वा महायशाः।

Mahābhārata 1.66.46.

It is possible also that the Chyavana, who married Arushī and begot Aurva, was a descendent of the earlier Chyavana in the line of Pramati and Ruru, and thus after them all, the pravara giving the names of the more important rishis in the gotra. The Haihaya princes started a wholesale slaughter of the Bhrigus coveting their wealth. This sudden birth of Aurva of great lustre resulted in his blaze blinding them all, but they got back their sight by supplication to the child:

स भित्वोंरु शिशुर्जातो दिवाकर इवापरः । दृशैव राजसंघानां जहार सहसा दृशः ।। अभ्यासे क्षत्रियाः सर्वे प्रसाद्य ब्राह्मग्रां भयात् । चक्ष्रंपि तद्विरा प्राप्य ययुर्भग्नपराक्रमाः ।।

Bhāratamañjarī 1, 1002-1003.

It is the anger of this boy that blazed forth as Aurva fire, which, fearing that it might destroy the entire world was requested by the manes to be thrown in the ocean. Closely related to Bhrigu is Aurva known even in the Rigveda 10.98.11. From this it is clear that the sage, juvenile or aged, was equally potent. What Kālidāsa has said of the child Sudarśana, a six-year old prince that occupied the Ikshvāku throne with dignity, the word Mahārāja fitting him so well like the name mahānīla, lustrous sapphire, that cannot fail to shine even in a miniature gem of the variety:

मणौ महानील इति प्रभावादलपप्रमार्गोऽपि यथा न मिथ्या। शब्दो महाराज इति प्रतीतस्तर्थैव तस्मिन् ययुजेऽर्भकेपि।।

Raghuvamśa 18.42,

applies to the sage as well.

Chyavana's youthful transformation at the hands of the Aśvins which is such a famous epic legend is already known to the Rigveda in the glory of the divine physicians:

युवं च्यवानं जरसोऽमुमुक्तम्

Rigveda 7.71.5.

The Aśvins rescued Atri from distress and darkness:

निरंहसस्तमसः स्पर्तमित्रम्

Rigveda 7.71.5.

The *rishi* Dīrghatamas, son of Uchathya, (same as Utathya in the epic), and Mamatā, is known from the *Rigveda* almost as in the epic legend and utters a prayer to the Aśvins to protect him. May this prayer addressed to you Oh Aśvins! protect me, son of Uchathya.

उपस्तुतिरौचध्यमुरुष्येन्मा

Rigveda 1.158.4.

He is Māmateya, son of Mamatā, who by the grace of the Aśvins could live long and age only after ten aeons:

दीर्घतमा मामतेयो जुजुर्वान् दशमे युगे।

Rigveda 1.158.6.

So old a seer is Vasishtha that he is among the gods composing the manes, the kindly forefathers, Soma-loving Vasishthas:

ये नः पूर्वे पितरः सोम्यासोऽनूहिरे सोमपीथं वसिष्ठाः ।

Rigveda 10.15.8.

Other ancient seers similarly deified as manes are Angirasas, Atharvāņas, Navagvas and Bhrigus:

अङ्गिरसो नः पितरो नवग्वा अथर्वाणो भृगवः सोम्यासः।

Rigveda 10,14.6.

The ancient seers Navagva, Angira, Dasagva and Brihaspati (here referred to as Saptāsya) had prosperity showered on them in days of yore, and now the divine goddess of light Ushas is asked whether it was to be by an ancient course or a new one for her to shine on us as on Navagva, Angiras, Dasagva and the sevenmouthed Brihaspati:

कुवत्स देवीः सनयो नवो वा यमो बभूयादुषसो वो अद्य। येना नवग्वे अङ्किरे दशग्वे सप्तास्ये रेवती रेवदूष॥

Rigveda 4.51,4.

The miraculous birth of sages is equally partially known to the Vedas though later elaborated. Though both Vasishtha and Agastya are born of Mitra and Varuṇa through the Apsaras Urvaśī in the case of Vasishtha, the birth of Agastya in a pitcher is an elaborate epic legend given by Sāyana on the hymn of the Rigveda. The hymn that gives the birth of the great Vasishtha describes him as the son of Mitra and Varuṇa in their love for Urvaśī who with her longing for

him bore him from their fallen drop, celestical in glory, placed gently by all the gods on a lotus blossom:

उतासि मैत्रावरुणो वसिष्ठोर्वश्या ब्रह्मन् मनसोऽधि जातः । द्रप्सं स्कन्नं ब्रह्मणा दैव्येन विश्वे देवाः पुष्करे त्वाददन्त ॥

Rigveda 7.33.11.

Both Agastya, here called Māna, and Vasishtha were born from a pitcher into which fell the semen of both Mitra and Varuṇa as they were prayed by hymns at the sacrifice and there arose Māna and then was born Vasishtha:

> सत्रे ह जाताविषिता नभोभिः कुम्भे रेतः सिषिचतुः समानम् । ततो ह मान उदियाय मध्यात्ततो जातं ऋषिमाहुर्वसिष्ठम् ॥

> > Rigveda 7.33.13.

As the semen of Mitra-Vaiuna that fell in the pitcher was taken out and placed on a lotus blossom by the celestials Vasishtha's birth is treated as on the ground, only Agastya who arose from the pitcher of the measure of a śamī stick and so dwarfish, was also called māna or mānya, the pitcher itself being a measure. This is explained by Saunaka and quoted by Sāyana in commenting on the riks describing their birth:

स्थले वसिष्ठस्तु मुनिः सम्भूत ऋषिसत्तमः।
कुम्भे त्वगस्त्यः सम्भूतो जले मात्स्यो महाद्युतिः।
जिदयाय ततोऽगस्त्यः शम्यमात्रो महायशाः।।
मानेन संमितो यस्मात् तस्मान्मान्य इहोच्यते।
यद्वा कुम्भादृषिर्जातः कुम्भेनापि च मीयते।।
कुम्भ इत्यमिधानं तु परिमाणस्य लक्ष्यते।
ततोऽप्मु गृह्यमाणासु वसिष्ठः पुष्करे स्थितः।।
सर्वत्र पुष्करं तत्र विश्वे देवा अधारयन्।

Bṛihaddevatā 5,151-155,

Wondering at the tejas of Vasishtha, he is addressed reminding that when Mitra and Varuna saw him as a lustre arising from the lightning, that was one birth of his, and his other was when he was brought along similarly by Agastya, his twin:

विद्युतो ज्योतिः परि संजिहानं मित्रावरुणा यदपश्यतां त्वा । तत्ते जन्मोतैकं वसिष्ठागस्त्यो यत् त्वां विश आजहार ॥

Rigveda 7.33.10.

Vasishtha's bereavement of his sons, and performance of a sacrifice to obtain progeny and how he got it and overcame Sudāsa is known from the Yajurveda:

वसिष्ठो हतपुत्रो ऽकामयत विदेयं प्रजामिभ सौदासान् भवेयिमिति स एतमेकस्मान्नपंचाशं अपश्यत् तमाहरत् तेनायजत ततो वै सोविन्दत प्रजामिभ सौदासानभवत् । Taittirīya Samhitā 7,4,7.1.

Similarly his rivalry with Viśvāmitra is known in the Rigveda. Śakti, the son of Vasishtha according to the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2.390 is able to render Viśvāmitra unsconscious at the sacrifice of Sudāsa according to the Brihaddevatā 4,112-113.

सुदासश्च महायज्ञे शक्तिना गाथिसूनवे । निगृहींतं बलाच्चेतः सोऽवसीदद्विचेतनः।।

But regaining consciousness Viśvāmitra pronounced abhiśāpas or imprecations to destroy the Vasishṭhas.

विश्वामित्रेण ताः प्रोक्ता अभिशापा इति स्मृताः ।... शतधा भिद्यते मूर्घा कीर्तितेन श्रुतेन वा ।।

Bṛihaddevatā 4.118,120.

So the rivalry between the Vasishthas and Viśvāmitras has its germ in the *Vedas* before elaboration in the epics.

Viśvāmitra, the son of Kuśika according to the Rigveda 3,33,5 has a special invocation for the rivers Vipāśā (Beas) and Śutudrī (Sutlej) and helps crossing them even in their high floods by the efficacy of his prayer. Oh rivers! Tarry a while your high flood flow at this earnest request of the son of Kuśika who lauds you highly:

रमध्वं मे वचसे सोभ्याय ऋतावरीरुप मुहूर्तमेवैः । प्र सिन्धुमच्छा बृहती मनीषावस्युरह्वे कुशिकस्य सूनुः ।।

Rigveda 3.33.5.

Viśvāmitra's adoption of Śunaḥśepa and his naming him Devarāta mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa is already known from the Aitareya Āraṇyaka 7.16. The purchase of Śunaḥśepa to be a sacrificial victim and his release when he was bound to the stake is story preserved in some hymns of the Rigveda 1,24: 5,27. Śunaḥśepa, as a seer, by praising Indra and the Aśvins got a golden celestial car:

स्तूयमानः शश्वदिति प्रीतस्तु मनसा ददौ । शुनःशोपाय दिव्यं तु रथं सर्वं हिरण्मयम् ॥

Bṛihaddevatā 3.103.

In the very first sacrifice of the *Purushasūkta*, the sacrificers are the celestials, semi-celestials, Sādhyas and the sages:

तेन देवा अयजन्त साघ्या ऋषयश्च ये।

Rigveda 10.90.7.

Rishis famous in the epics like Agastya, Kanva, Mudgala, Vāmadeva, Atri, Kutsa, Medhyātithi, Uśanā, and the great rishi Dadhīchi who gave his bones for the preparation of the thunderbolt are known in the Rigveda and later Vedic literature. Agni is invoked as he that was taken from the Sun, ritādadhi, and lit by Kanva and Medhyātithi shines forth in lustre rushing as hymns are offered to brighten his light:

यमिंन मेध्यातिथिः कण्व ईघ ऋतादिध । तस्य प्रेष्यो दिदीयुस्तिममा ऋचस्तमिंन वर्धयामिस ॥

Rigveda 1.36.11.

Dadhīchi is called Dadhyanch, and the killing of Vritra with the bones of Dadhyanch is also a Vedic episode. A rik hemistich describes how Indra, unassailable by others, killed ninetynine Vritra demons with the bones of Dadhīcha:

> इन्द्रो दधीचो अस्थिभिवृ त्राण्यप्रतिष्कुतः । जघान नवतीर्नव ।

> > Rigveda 1.84.13.

There are other Vedic rishis like Virupas associated with Angirasas,

Navagvas, Daśagvas, Priyamedha, Atharvan, Turvaśa.

The legend of Paraśurāma giving the entire earth to Kaśyapa whence its name Kāśyapī is almost answered in the association of the earth with the utterance of Kaśyapa and established by the Almighty for all beings:

मृत्तिके ब्रह्मदत्तासि कश्यपेनाभिमन्त्रिता ।

Mahānārayanopanishad 1.39.

Kaśyapa as an ancient seer has mention in the Rigveda where the hymn addresses him, Oh sage Kaśyapa, creator of hymns! By

your laudation in stentorian voice bow to the king Soma, who was born the lord of vegetation, flow for Indra flow:

ऋषे मन्त्रकृतां स्तोमैः कश्यपोद्वर्धयन्गिरः । सोमं नमस्य राजानं यो जज्ञे वीरुधां पतिरिन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

Rigveda 9.114.2

He occurs in the Vājasaneyi Samhitā 3,62 and the text of the Sāmaveda 1,1,2,4,10,14,2,3,2. He is described in the Brihaddevatā as son of Marīchi and grandson of Prajāpati and the husband of thirteen daughters of Daksha, Aditi, Diti and others. This enumeration is almost the same as in the Mahābhārata:

प्राजापत्यो मरीचिहि मारीच: कश्यपो मुनि: । तस्य देव्योऽभवन् जाया दक्षकन्यास्त्रयोदश ॥ अदितिर्दितिर्देनु: काला दनायुः सिंहिका मुनि: । कोधा विश्वा वारिष्ठा च सुरभिविनता तथा ॥ कद्रश्चेति.....

Bṛihaddevatā 5, 143-145.

Atri is an early Vedic seer counted along with Dadhyanch, Angiras, Priyamedha, Manu, Kanva and others given in the *Rigveda* 1.139.9. The Aśvins made Atri, grown old in prayers to them, so energetic as to attain his end like a speeding horse as they had also made Kakshīvat regain youth like a chariot renewed:

त्वं चिदित्रं ऋतजुरमर्थमश्वं न यातवे। कक्षीवन्तं यदी पुना रथं न कृर्गुथो नवम्।।

Rigveda 10,143.1.

They similarly cooled the fiery blaze from which suffered Atri, just as they protected sage Rebha from deep surrounding danger:

युवं रेमं परिषूतेरुरुव्यथो हिमेन घर्मं परितप्तमत्रये।

Rigveda 1,119.6.

Atri, the great sage that he was, could set the sun bright again dispelling the gloom come over him from the demonaic Svarbhānu (Rāhu), where Sāyana says he set his own eye, an episode transformed into the story of the lunar light in later mythology. Atri set in the sky the eye of Sūrya whose light was eclipsed by removing the illusory darkness of Svarbhānu:

अतिः सूर्यस्य दिवि चक्षुराधात् स्वर्भानोरप माया अधुक्षत् ।

Rigveda 5.40,8.

Similarly Gotama is another of the well known ancient *rishis* famous in Vedic literature. A prayer of Nodhā son of Gotama is specially mentioned to hail Indra though he had only a curse from Gotama according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the Vedic Indra, it should be remembered, was a nobler celestial personality. Oh! most ancient Indra! with green horses yoked to your chariot, leader on the right path, come quickly at daybreak, enriched by this prayer of ours, a new one composed by sage Nodhā son of Gotama:

सनायते गोतम इन्द्र नव्यमक्षद्ब्रह्म हरियोजनाय। सुनीथाय न सबसान नोघाः प्रातर्मक्षू घियावसुर्जगम्यात्।। Rigveda 1.62.13.

Gotama's own prayer to Agni is also spoken of highly. Oh Jātaveda! keen observer of all! we incessantly pray to you with the prayer put forth by sage Gotama extolling your splendour. We pray to you with those splendid hymns that Gotama worshipped you desirous of wealth:

अभि त्वा गोतमा गिरा जातवेदो विचर्षगो । द्युम्नैरिभ प्र णोनुमः । तमु त्वा गोतमो गिरा रायस्कामो दुवस्यति । द्युम्नैरिभ प्र णोनुमः ॥ Rigveda 1,78,1-2.

Another of Gotama's prayers to Agni is so powerful as to prevail in success. I overcome even the mighty ones by my relationship with the utterances of our father Gotama that have great power.

The Maruts are also so kind to the great sage Gotama that they take up the clouds in a different direction towards where was sage Gotama and pour a shower to quench his thirst at his hermitage:

In deriving Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati speech is taken as Brihatī and Brahma and the derivation is

वाग्वै बृहती तस्या एष पतिः । तस्मादु बृहस्पतिः । वाग्वै ब्रह्म, तस्य एष पतिः । तस्मादु ब्रह्मणस्पतिः ।

Bṛihadāranyakopanishad 1,3,20,21

The word Brih or Brahmana is also taken as prayer i.e. lord of prayer. Another derivation is

बृहतां देवानां पालयिता इन्द्रपुरोहितः under स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्देधातु ।

Mahānārāyanopanishad 1.43.

He is always a celestial and a priestly seer. On the line giving that the people themselves bow voluntarily to the king who places the priest above all as the foremost,

तस्मै विशः स्वयमेवा नमन्ते यस्मिन् ब्रह्मा राजनि पूर्व एति ।

Rigveda 4.50.8.

the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 8.26.9 explains purohitam evaitad āha. Aghamarshaṇa is a sage who is purifying like Varuṇa and for this a prayer is put forth to him पुनात्वधमर्षणः Mahānāyaṇopanishad 1.66.

Like Bhrigu Vāruņi who asked his father to explain the Supreme Brahman to him, there is a similar request from Āruņi son of Prajāpati and Suparņā:

प्राजापत्यो हारुणिः सुप्रनेयः प्रजापति पितर-मूपससार कि भगवन्तः परं वदन्तीति ।

Mahānārāyanopanishad 79.1.

Though Luders believes that there may be some old elements contained in the name Riśyaśringa, there is no Vedic text to support this epic legend. Similarly though Aurva is known to the Rigveda and later Vedic texts as a descendent of Bhrigu in the Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇa 30.5., and is from Atri according to the Taittirīya Samhitā 7.1.8.1, the strange birth from the thigh of his mother as given in the Mahābhārata is probably earlier unknown. But these contexts of miraculous births have resulted in such a one being provided even for the famous prince Siddhārtha who was later to become a sage as Śākyamuni, and Siddhārtha is born, not in the natural way, but from the right side of his mother as she stood under the Sāl tree, a miraculous birth as Aśvaghosha specially illustrates. Then when the Pushya star was

propitious was born a son for the weal of the world from the side of the queen pure by her rigour:

तस्याश्च देव्या व्रतसंस्कृतायाः पार्श्वात्सुतो लोकहिताय जज्ञे।

Buddhacharita 1.10.

His birth was as miraculous as that of Aurva born from the thigh, Prithu from the hand, Māndhātā equal to Indra from the head, and Kakshīvat from the armpit:

ऊरोर्यथौर्वस्य पृथोश्च हस्तान्मान्धातुरिन्द्रप्रतिमस्य मू ध्नः । कक्षीवतश्चैव भुजांसदेशत्तथाविधं तस्य वभूव जन्म ॥

Buddhacharita 1.11.

This theme became a great favourite in Buddhist sculpture of every school and date in India (Fig. 5) and in South and South East Asia.

Though it is not certain for some scholars whether Kapila mentioned in the line:

ऋषि प्रसूतं किपलं यस्तमग्रे ज्ञानैविभित्त जायमानं च पश्चात् । Śvetāśvataropanishad 5.2,

is the author of Sāmkhya, there is no improbability in it, as the very ancestral capital of the Śākyas was named after him, a seer of great antiquity, and he is famous in ancient myth and legend, with representations even so far away as in Śrī Lańkā (Fig. 6), and is moreover considered one of the incarnations of the Lord. Aśvaghosha has a special proud reference to Kapila in the name Kapilavāstu:

आसीद्विशालोन्नतसानुलक्ष्म्या पयोदपङ्क्त्येव परीतपार्श्वम् । उदग्रधिष्ण्यं गगनेऽवगाढं पुरं महर्षेः कपिलस्य वास्तु ॥

Buddhacharita 1.2.

He repeats the association of the great Kapila and his pupil Asuri, the former hallowed as an incarnation of Vishnu in the Mahābhārata, in his verse

सशिष्यः किपलश्चेह प्रतिबुद्धिरिति स्मृतिः।

Buddhacharita 12.21.

Śunaḥśepa rescued from Varuṇapāśa through the grace of Viśvāmitra in the Rāmāyaṇa story is similarly rescued from the same Varuṇapāśa in the Rigveda. Oh, Varuṇa! Bowing to you with glorious

hymn I approach you and adoring you with oblations. Listen without disregard to my prayer and pray do not take away my life. Night and day I was told so by the wise ones that know, and this thought in my mind also tells me so. May that Lord Varuna release us, who called for, released Sunahsepa tied to the stake:

तत्त्वा यामि ब्रह्मणा वन्दमानस्तदा शास्ते यजमानो हिविभिः। अहेडमानो वरुगोह बोध्युरुशंस मा न आयुः प्रमोषीः।। तिदिन्नक्तं तिद्वा मह्ममाहुस्तदयं केतो हृदा आ वि चष्टे। शुनःशेपो यमाह्नद्गृभीतः सो अस्मान् राजा वरुणो मुमोक्तु।।

Rigveda 1,24,11-12.

This is also given in the Taittirīya Samhitā 5,2,1,3. But the legend nearer the epic is only in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 7,13-18.

Similarly, Riśyaśringa known both in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata as the son and pupil of sage Vibhaṇḍaka, is the teacher of the latter in the Vamśa Brāhmaṇa. Peculiar derivations of the names of certain rishis even in later Vedic literature, like Vātaraśanas, wind-girt, Vaikhānasas and Vālakhilyas,

स तपस्तप्त्वा शारीरमधूत । तस्य यन्मांसमासीत् ततोरुणा : केतवो वातरशना ऋषय उदितष्ठन् । ये नखास्ते वैखानसाः । ये वालास्ते वालिखल्याः ।

Taittirīya Āranyaka 1.23,

assumed greater elaboration in epic legendary accounts. The Rāmāyaṇa mentions seers in severe penance like Vaikhānasas, Vālakhilyas, Samprakshālas, Marīchipas, Aśmakuṭṭas, Patrāhāras, Dantolūkhalins, Unmajjakas, Gātraśayyas, Aśayyas, Anavakāśikas, Salilāhāras, Vāyubhakshas, Ākāśanilayas and Sthaṇḍilavāsins:

> वैखानसा वालखिल्याः संप्रक्षाला मरीचिपाः । अश्मकुट्टाश्च वहवः पत्राहाराश्य तापसाः ॥ दन्तोलुखलिनश्चैव तथैवोन्मज्जकाः परे । गात्रशय्या अशय्याश्य तथैवानवकाशिकाः ॥ मुनयः सलिलाहारा वायुभक्षास्तथापरे । आकाशनिलयाश्चैव तथा स्थण्डिलवासिनः ॥

> > Rāmāyana 2,6,2-4.

The Vaikhānasas subsist either on roots, fruits or flowers,

मुलैरेके फलैरेके पुष्पैरेके दृढवताः।

and maintain complete celibacy. That is why Dushyanta asks whether

Śakuntalā would be a Vaikhānasa opposed to all acts of love till she was given away in marriage by her father:

वैखानसं किमनया व्रतमा प्रदानाद् व्यापाररोधि मदनस्य निषेवितव्यम् ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 1.23.

The Vālakhilyas are sixtythousand *rishis* of great power and piety born of Kratu and Samnati, that precede Sūrya hailing him with prayers:

वालखिल्याः सहस्राणि पष्ठिर्ब्रह्मर्षयोऽमलाः । पुरतोऽभिमुखं यान्ति स्तुवन्तस्तुतिभिविभुम् ॥

Bhāgavata 12.11.

They are no more than half a thumb, liliputian in size, but titanic in penance:

अथापश्यदृषीन् ह्रस्वानंगुष्ठोदरवर्ष्मणः ।

Mahābharata 1.31.8.

The representation of Sūrya on the Lālā Bhagat pillar (Fig. 7) gives these dwarf sages preceding the solar chariot as Kālidāsa has it,

विरराज रथप्रष्ठैर्वालखिल्यैरिवांशुमान्।

Raghuvamśa 15.10.

They are also Marīchipas, drinking only solar rays. The Vātaraśanas of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* who are unclad but only wind-girt are Vāyubhakshas in the *Rāmāyaṇa* subsisting on air:

वातभक्षा निराहारा तप्यन्ती भस्मशायिनी।

Rāmāyana 1.48.30.

Patrāhāras subsist on mere dry leaves, and as Pārvatī in her attitude of penance gave up even that, she was called Aparņā:

तदप्यपाकीर्णमतः प्रियंवदां वदन्त्यपर्णेति च तां पुराविदः ॥

Kumārasambhava 5.28.

Unmajjakas are *rishis* like Saubhari or Chyavana in deep penance immersed for years in the deep waters of rivers like the Yamunā:

बह्व चश्च सौभरिर्नाम ऋषिरन्तर्जलं द्वादशाब्दं कालमुवास ।

Vishņupurāņa 4.2.20.

Sthandilavasins are ever constantly on the floor in rigour of heat and cold and sleep on the bare ground:

अशेत सा बाहुलतोपधायिनी निषेदुषी स्थण्डिल एव केवलम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 5.12.

Asmakuttas eat stones by grinding them with their teeth. Salilāhāras live just on water as Rāma did at Śringiberapura for a day. The long periods of penance are already envisaged in the Rigveda where sages lost in meditation are silent for months and make utterances breaking their silence after ever so long like frogs that croak at the approach of the rains:

संवत्सरं शशयाना ब्राह्मणा व्रतचारिणः। वाचं पर्जन्यजिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका अवादिपुः॥

Rigveda 7.103.1.

It is this $k\bar{a}sht$ hamauna of Samīka that was misunderstood by Parīkshit when he went to his hermitage but could not be spoken to and welcomed.

ततो राजा क्षुत्श्रमार्तस्तं मुनिं स्थाणुवत् स्थितम् । मौनव्रतधरं शान्तं सद्यो मन्युवशं गतः ॥

Mahābhārata 1.49.28

Kṛishṇa Devakīputra is a rājaṛishi sage, disciple of Ghora Āngirasa who by his teaching made him free from desires and stressed that at the final moment of life one should take refuge in three thoughts 'You are indestructible, unshaken and the very essence of life. On this there are these two rik verses. Moving on from the primal seed, high up beyond darkness and higher than the heavens is seen the highest light and we attain the Sun, the highest celestial among the celestials, the highest light, yea, the highest light:

तध्दैतद्धोर आङ्गिरसः कृष्णाय देवकीपुत्रायोक्त्वोवाच । अपिपास एव स बभूव । सोऽन्तवेलायामेतत्रयं प्रतिपद्येत् । अक्षितमसि । अच्युतमसि । प्राणसंशितमसीति । तत्रैते द्वे ऋचौ भवतः । आदिति प्रत्नस्य रेतसः । उद्वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिः पश्यन्त उत्तरं स्वः पश्यन्त उत्तरम् । देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तममिति । ज्योतिरुत्तममिति ।

Chāndogyopanishad 3.17.6-7.

The epic glory of the *Bhagavadgītā* by the *Gītāchārya* (Fig. 8 and 9). has its germ in this beautiful, simple, short passage of the *Upanishad*. The elaboration of the *ṛishi* theme in the Vedic period itself, some of them known as very early and others new,

ये च पूर्वे ऋषयः ये च नूत्नाः इन्द्र ब्रह्माणि जनयन्त विप्राः ।

Rigveda 7.22.9.

reaches a climax in the epic and *Purāṇa* that becomes a maze no doubt; but this is the noblest theme that has caused the imagination of the *Paurāṇika* and *Pāṭhaka* to stress the highest codes of ethical life not only by narrations, quoting here is an ancient parable:

अत्राप्युदाहरन्तीममितिहासं पुरातनम्।

repeated by Śākyamuni in his Jātakas and Aṭṭakathā, in the Ākhyānas and Avadānas, but also elaborated in the conduct of life in the Smṛitis and Gṛihyasūtras also authored by ṛishis like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vasishṭha, Nārada, Parāśara, Śaṅkhalikhita, Devala and others. No wonder Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita describes them as the kinsmen of the entire world, so oceanic in their compassion, like a father to his sons in their kindly instructions distinctly spoken, which however we ignore in our blind infatuation mountain-like in its magnitude, super-ciliously even questioning who indeed is that Vyāsa, Manu or Yājñavalkya:

को नु व्यासः क इव स मनुः कोन्वसौ याज्ञवल्क्यो यैरुद्धुष्टं हितमसक्वदस्मासु पित्रेव पुत्रे । पश्यामस्तान् निरुपिषक्वपासागरान् लोकवन्धून् पश्यामोऽस्मान् निरविधतमः स्माधरान् ब्रह्मवन्धून् ।।

Śāntivilāsa 24.

Aśvaghosha lays stress on the muni aspect of Siddhārtha even at the moment of his royal birth as at his birth the celestials of Tushita heaven were pleased as well as those of Śuddhāvāsa in anticipation of the glory of the great Dharma he was to expound in his compassion for the living beings, and the Supreme One was born with the banner of the highest good for all in his hand, himself reaching the pinnacle of fame, shining with an effulgence of peace, as if the very embodiment of righteousness:

तुतुषुस्तुषिताश्चेव शुद्धावासाश्च देवताः। सद्धर्मबहुमानेन सत्वानां चानुकम्पया।। समाययौ यशःकेतुं श्रेयःकेतुकरः परः। वश्राजे शान्तया लक्ष्मया धर्मो विग्रहवानिव।।

Saundarananda 2, 55-56.

That is why Amarasimha in his Amarakośa repeats the word muni thrice in recounting his names

मुनीन्द्र: श्रीघनः शास्ता मुनिः शाक्यमुनिस्तु यः ।

It is therefore to be expected that an aspect of Buddha with the jaṭā of a muni should be a special form of his in art. Such a one is the Buddha from Katrā with a single thick dextral curl projecting forth on the head as a special form of jaṭā even as Śiva has a special jaṭā called kaparda. This is a unique form of Buddha's ushṇīsha-cum-jaṭā (Fig. 10).

The Vedas are the breath of the Almighty: yasya niḥśvasitam vedāḥ. The four faces of Brahmā are intended for the four Vedas to

be pronounced with their appropriate intonation, svara. Brahmā's four faces represent the four Vedas: that facing the east is for the Rigveda, the one to the south is for the Yajus, the western one for the Sama and the northern is for the Atharva. He carries the Vedas in these four mouths and his holding them is indicated by his kamandalu or water vessel. The akshamālā or the rosary is a suggestion of time and eternity that he controls as he reckons time. According to the root kal to reckon, time itself is called kāla. He wears the deer skin krishnājina which has a double shade whitish and dark, indicating the bright and dark fortnights and the sacrificial days of the new moon and the full moon. There are seven lokas, worlds, Bhūh, Bhuvah,



Figure 11. Brahmā on seven swans, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Elephanṭā Suvah, Mahah, Janah, Tapah,

Satyam. He is the lord of these; and these form the seven swans that lightly bear his chariot (Fig. 11 and 12). The lotus that arises from the navel of Vishņu is the earth itself, of which the great Meru mountain is the central lotus peri carp, where the lord is seated in padmāsana, like a king on the throne in all his royal state, in his world where, in an attitude of meditation, with his eyes closed, he looks at the world observing all that happens.

All the verdure of the earth, the herbs, are the locks (jaṭās) of Brahmā who occupies the entire expanse as the sustainer of the universe, and the illuminating sources of knowledge, of which he is the lord, are the ornaments that adorn him. This is the great form of the formless who is yet the form of the entire universe and, as the foremost in the universe, he upholds it all through this divine form of his. He is the lord of all devas, is the god of the gods, devavaraḥ and adored by all:

ब्रह्मा देववरो ज्ञेयः सर्वभूतनमस्कृतः।

His colour is golden red and of the nature of rajas, arunam rajaso varnam, and the tinge is like that of the tip of the lotus petal,

..... तेन पदमाग्रसंनिभः। ऋग्वेदः पूर्ववदनं यजुर्वेदस्त् दक्षिणम् । पश्चिमं सामवेदः स्यादाथर्वणमथोत्तरम ॥ ये वेदास्ते मुखा ज्ञेयाश्चतस्रो बाहवो दिशः। आप एव जगत्सर्वं स्थावरं जङ्गमं तथा।। ताश्च धारयते ब्रह्मा तेन हस्ते कमण्डलु:। अक्षमाला विनिर्दिष्टा कालस्तु ब्रह्मणः करे ॥ कलनात् सर्वभृतानां काल इत्यभिधीयते। यज्ञं वितन्वते सन्तः शुक्लाशुक्लेन कर्मणा।। शुक्लाशुक्लमतो ज्ञेयं वासः कृष्णाजिनं विभोः। भलोकश्च भूवो लोकः स्वलींकोऽथ महत् तथा।। जनस्तपश्च सत्यं च सप्त लोकाः प्रकीतिताः। ये लोकास्ते रथे हंसा ब्रह्मणः परमेष्ठिनः॥ विष्णुनाभी समुप्पंन्न यत्पद्मं सा मही द्विज। मेरस्तु कणिका तस्य विज्ञेया राजसत्तम ॥ सर्वत्र पश्चिवस्थैयं ध्यानवन्धमतः स्थितम् । पदमासनेन भगवान विधत्ते पार्थिवेन तु ॥

आत्मनः परमं धाम रूपहींनं विचिन्तयेत्। दृष्टचर्यं जगतामास्ते ध्यानसंमीलितेक्षणः ।। तथैवोषधयो राजन् जगद्धारणकारणाः । ब्रह्मणस्ता जटा ज्ञेयाः सर्वगस्य महात्मनः ।। प्रकाशकानि लोकस्य विद्यास्थानानि यानि च । तस्याभरणजातानि ज्ञेयानि परमेष्ठिनः ।। एतद्धि तस्याप्रतिमस्य रूपं तबेरित सर्वजगन्मयस्य । एवं शरीरेण जगत् समंग्र संधारयत्येव जगत्प्रधानः ।।

Vishnudharmottara 3,46,7-19

The *ṛishis* are the direct offspring of Brahmā himself. That is the importance of the *ṛishis*. Even some of the celestials are born of the *ṛishis*. As the offspring of Brahmā the *ṛishis* are all closely associated with the *Vedas* and as the seers of the hymns of the *Vedas* as the life breath and fragrance of Brahmā himself are the *Vedas*. A sculpture from Aihole belonging to the eighth century and of early Western Chāļukya workmanship now in the Prince of Wales Museum, is a beautiful representation of Brahmā adored by the *ṛishis* (Fig. 13). How the *ṛishis* adore Brahmā as Pitāmaha, the grandfather of the gods and the *ṛishis*, is given beautifully by Bāṇa in his *Harshacharita*. The row of seven swans that he mentions carrying him up lightly in the sky are represented so in almost all the imposing Vākāṭaka panels of Śiva in various forms in Elephaṇṭā (Fig. 12). The swans are so light in their flight that as a fleet they carry Brahmā along:

विश्रान्तिमव विततपक्षितिना वियति पितामहविमानहंसयूथेन ।

Harshacharita 7 p. 335.

Even in that majesty Brahmā, who, as Krishna has put it in another context, that he acts all the time, only to set an example for the world to act by emulating him, though really he has no purpose in his action to attain anything unobtained as he is beyond all such:

> न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन । नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मण ॥ यद्यदाचरित श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः । स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

Bhagavadgītā 3, 27.31

also acts, arising from his lotus seat in the evening, as Bāṇa vividly describes, after dissolving the assembly of gods and sages, resting his

hand on the shoulder of Nārada, to perform the appropriate ritual of the evening sandhyā prayer:

विसर्जितसुरासुरमुनिमण्डलः ससंभ्रमोपगतनारदस्कन्ध-विन्यस्तवामहस्तपल्लवः समुचिताह्निककरणायोदतिष्ठत् ।

Harshacharita 1. p. 21.

The lord of lords, Siva himself, does not escape this setting of an example in a disciplined tenor of life. Utprekshāvallabha fancies that the goddess of Twilight is indeed most fortunate, at the very sight of whom, the wielder of the $pin\bar{a}ka$ bow (Siva) joyously loosens the knots of his decorated cluster of jatas, and in the presence of Devī herself, starts dancing wildly without the least restraint:

धन्या हि सा भगवती दिवसान्तसन्ध्या यामागतां भुवि सुवीक्ष्य पिनाकपाणिः । विश्लिष्टवन्धनजटाभरणः स हर्षा-द्रौर्याः समक्षमपि नृत्यति बीतशंकः ॥

Bhikshāṭanakāvya 31, 15.

Dance is the supreme offering in $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$ ritual. Śrī Harsha almost identifies Devī with Sandhyā and makes Śiva dance before her placing her as a witness of this glorious dance as a connoisseur. Śiva as Mahānaṭa or the Supreme Dancer, meditates on the great goddess of Twilight, aglow with the crimson hue of red arsenic, though deficient as an accomplished dancer, and now dances perhaps in the glory of the (setting) sun, creating lovely flexions, aṅgahāras, his body, the sky itself, garlanded with stars:

महानटः किंनु समानुरागे संध्याय संध्यां कुनटीमपीशाम् । तनोति तन्वा वियतापि ताराश्रेणीस्रजा सांप्रतमङ्ग हारम् ॥ Naishadhīyacharita 22, 7.

The pun here is on the words mahanaţa, kunaţā and aṅgahāra. Kunaţā 'red arsenic' means literally 'bad dancer', which is contrasted with mahānaṭa, great dancer. The sky is one of the forms of Śiva. Evening being the time for Śiva's dance, he is described as dancing in his sky form, the twinkling of the stars being the rhythm of his dance. Devī or Iśā, the great goddess, the mistress of the worlds, bright in energy like red arsenic (kunaṭā) is deficient in dancing (kunaṭā), in comparison with Mahānaṭa the Premier Dancer, Śiva. Śiva dances in the evening,

sandhyā, and adores Devī as the goddess Sandhyā, placing her as a great connoisseur of his dance as seen in the *Pradoshastava*. And there are many other descriptions of Siva engaged in sandhyopāsanā. A fine Kāngrā painting (Fig. 14) is an excellent illustration of the theme. A mural from the Siva temple at Ettumānur ilustrates with what inordinate interest the *rishis* watch his dance (Fig. 15).

It is no wonder that the noble *rishis* who are the foremost in setting an example to the world in *nityakarma*, in most worshipful attitude offer *en masse* in a lovely to behold whole forest of hands brought together in *añjali*, the holy water as *arghya* in twilight worship sandhyā:

वन्दारुमुनिवृन्दारकबध्यमानबन्धुरसन्ध्याञ्जलिवने ।

Harshacharita 1 p. 23.

This arghya is followed by their sitting on the sand dunes of the celestial river purifying the place as they engage themselves in the japa or repeating of the gāyatrī hymn:

सन्ध्योपासनासीनतपस्विपङ्क्तिपूतपुलिने...मन्दाकिनीजले ।

Harshacharita 1 p. 24.

Bāṇa never tires of describing the holy atmosphere created even in the tīrtha itself, the bank of the holy celestial river. The celestial river is holy to that extent that Śiva himself is praised in his vibhūti or glory as Tīrthya and salutation is offered to him: नमस्तीथ्यीय च, Taittirīya Samhitā 4, 5, 8. Sāyaṇa explains this as abiding in the vicinity of holy spots like Prayāga: तीथे प्रयागादी संनिहितस्तीथ्यः। We may here bring to our mind the description of Śiva on the banks of sacred rivers like Narmadā or Kāverī:

कावेरिकानर्मदयोः पवित्रसमागमे सज्जनतारणाय। सदैव मान्धातृपुरे वसन्तमोंकारमीशं शिवमेकमीडे।। Dvādaśajyotirlingastotra 4

Trivenīsangama is one of the great tīrthas and is rightly represented in early Gupta sculpture. Siva is both Tīrthya and Kūlya as also Varshya, Avarshya, Meghya, respectively of the sacred spots, on river banks, of the rain showers, of the water independent of rain, of the



Fig. 14. Śivaś dance at Twilight, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 15. Śiva's dance witnessed by celestials and rishis, late Chera, Ettumānur, Kerala.

water-laden cloud. The sages thus eternally bathe him as abhishekap-riya (Fig. 16) and as jalamayamurti of the form of water itself, the Gangādhara form (Fig. 17 and 18) suggested in the epithets Sūrmya, Srotasya and Nādya:

नमो वर्ष्याय चावर्ष्याय च नमो मेघ्याय च नमः स्रोतस्याय च नमः सूम्यीय च नमो नाद्याय च

Taittirīya Samhitā 4,5,7-9.

That is why, going into an ecstasy over the Achchhoda lake, where anusthana or the daily ritual is so pleasant, Bana describes how here Brahmā, the grandfather of the gods, more than once fills his holy vessel (kamandalu) with water, how often the cluster of Valakhilya rishis love to do their sandhyā worship at this very spot, how frequently wading in this water Savitri would gently break the blooming lotuses from their stalks for worshipping the deity, how it is purified by the holy band of the seven rishis bathing a myriad times in it, the water so pure used by the Siddha damsels to wash their garments made of the bark of the celestial tree Kalpa. The water of the lake, mixed with the dripping ambrosial liquid of the lunar crescent crest jewel of Siva, ruffled by his immersing and rising a hundred times, as he plunges into it from Kailasa situated in such close proximity, creates the illusion as it were of the stream of feminine charm (lāvanya) from the left side of Siva's hermaphrodite form flowing into it. The lake could create such an overpowering admiration for its essential grandeur and charm:

> आसन्नकैलासावतीर्ण्स्य च शतशो भगवतः खण्डपरशोर्मज्जनोन्मज्जनक्षोभ-चिलतन्नुडामणिचण्द्रखण्डच्युतेनामृतरसेन जलक्षालितवामार्घकपोलगिलत-लावण्यप्रवाहानुकरिणा मिश्रितजलं...असकृत् पितामहपरिपूरितकमण्डलु-परिपूतजलं, अनेकशो वालखिल्यकदम्बककृतसंघ्योपासनं, वहुशः सिलला-वतीर्ण्सावित्रीभग्नदेवार्चनकमलसहस्रं, सहस्रशः सप्तिषमण्डलस्नानपिवत्रीकृतं, सर्वदा सिद्धवधूधीतकल्पलतावल्कलपुण्योदकम्।

> > Kādambarī p. 232.

Bāṇa describes Brahmā seated on a lotus at ease attended by Indra and the celestials, the seven sages (saptaṛishis), the lords of creation (prajāpatis) and so on. Thus it is said, long ago the blessed Parameshṭhī Brahmā was seated on a couch of blooming lotus in his

celestial world, surrounded by the gods headed by Indra, discussing the highest philosophical truth and appreciating impeccable discussions of great knowledge. As the Adorable to the three worlds was thus seated, all the Prajapatis or the masters of creation like Manu. Daksha, Chākshusha and others, all great rishis headed by the principal seven, attended on him, some of them, clever in hymnal prayers, repeated the riks, others in worshipful mood repeated the text of the vaius, some sang the adorable hymns sāma, still others repeated the mantras, the hymns that reveal the intricacies of the sacrificial ritual:

> एवमनुश्रयते-पूरा किल भगवान स्वं लोकमधितिष्ठन परमेष्ठी विकसिनि पद्यविष्टरे समूपविष्टः शुनासीरप्रमुखैर्गीविणैः परिवतो ब्रह्मोद्याः कथाः कुर्वन्नन्याँश्च निरवद्यविद्यागोष्ठीविभावयन कदाचिदा-सांचको । तथासीनं च तं त्रिभवनप्रतीक्ष्यं सर्वे मन्दक्षचाक्षषप्रभतयः प्रजापतयः सर्वे च सप्तिषपुरःसरा महामूनयः सिषेविरे । केचिदचः स्तुतिचत्राः समुदाचरन केचिदपचितिभाञ्जि यजुंष्यपठन् । केचित्प्र-शंसासामानि जगुः । अपरे विवतऋतुक्रियातन्त्रान मन्त्रानाचचिक्षरे ।

Harshacharita 1. p. 12-13

The rishis themselves, according to the description given in the Chitrasūtra, are to be of the Bhadra pramāna or the measurement of

the variety known as Bhadra, wearing jatājūta (Fig. 19), with their upper garments composed of krishnājina or the deer skin (Fig. 20), physically weak but completely lustrous:

कार्या भद्रप्रमारोन ब्राह्मणाश्च नरेश्वर। ऋषयस्तत्र कर्तव्या जटाजुटोपशोभिताः ॥ कृष्णाजिनोत्तरासंगा दुर्बलास्तेजसा युताः।

Vishnudharmottara 3, 42, 3-4.

Elsewhere in the same Chitrasūtra, sages and the manes (rishis and pitris) as well as the celestials are to be almost decorated by their own lustre blazing in their glory which completely undermines the

luminosity of any other in its presence:

ऋषयः पितरश्चैव देवताश्च नराधिप। स्वप्रभाभरणाः कार्या द्वतिमन्तस्तथैव च ।। मुष्णन्तस्तेजसां तेजः परेषां नपसत्तम ।

Vishnudharmottara 3, 37,16.



Fig. 19. Jaţājūţa of rishi, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

The best example of the *rishi*, weak in physical appearance but lustrous and compelling reverence, is seen in the seated one near the shrine of Vishnu in the panel of Arjuna's penance at Mahābali-puram (Fig. 21). The *rishis* are seers in the sense that they have seen



Fig. 20 Nara with Nārāyaņa as *rishi* wearing *krishņājina* upper garment, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh.

through divine vision the hymns of the Vedas: rishavo mantradrashtārah. In one of the texts invoking peace (santipathas), there is the adoration of speech as the highest embodiment of the infinite, of the rishis as its repositories. Salutation to speech, the uttered and unuttered, salutation again to that speech and to the lord of speech Vāchaspati (Brihaspati) - who, by the way — is himself an ideal of a rishi, salutation to the rishis, the composers of the Vedic mantras and the masters of mantras. Let me not be overlooked by the rishis, the makers of the Vedic mantras and their masters, nor I neglect them, the Vedic

composers and masters of the mantras. May I adore that universal speech auspicious and beloved of the gods:

नमो वाचे याचोदिता या चानुदिता तस्यै वाचे नमो नमो वाचे नमो वाचस्पतये नम ऋषिभ्यो मन्त्राकृद्भचो मन्त्रपतिभ्यो मा मामृषयो मन्त्रकृतो मन्त्रपतयः परादुर्माऽहमृषीन् मन्त्रपतीन् परादाम् वैश्वदेवीं वाचमुद्यासं शिवामदस्तां जुष्टां देवेभ्यः।

Taittirīya Āraņyaka 4,1,1.

That is why Kālidāsa loves often to refer to rishis of repute as mantrakrits, the creators of Vedic hymns. When Raghu enquires of Kautsa of scintillating intellect, the disciple of maharishi Varatantu, he asks him whether his master, the foremost among the composers of the Vedic hymns was in fine state:

अप्यग्रणीर्मन्त्रकृतामृषीणां कुशाग्रनुद्धे कुशली गुरुस्ते ।

Raghuvamśa 5, 4.

Elsewhere when Dilīpa addresses Vasishṭha, he describes his preceptor very reverentially as mantrakṛit. My foes completely vanquished even from afar by Vedic mantras, of which you are the composer, put to

shame my arrows however well aimed that can only strike the target before them:

तव मन्त्रकृतो मन्त्रैर्द्र्रात्प्रशमितारिभिः। प्रत्यादिश्यन्त इव मे दृष्टलक्ष्यभिदः शराः॥

Raghuvamśa 1, 61.

Vālmīki is also of the category of mantrakrits effectively performing their ritual as in the case of Lava and Kuśa:

सस्वा दशरथस्यपि जनकस्य च मन्त्रकृत्। संचस्कारोभयप्रीत्या मैथिलेयौ यथाविधि।।

Raghuvamśa 15, 31.

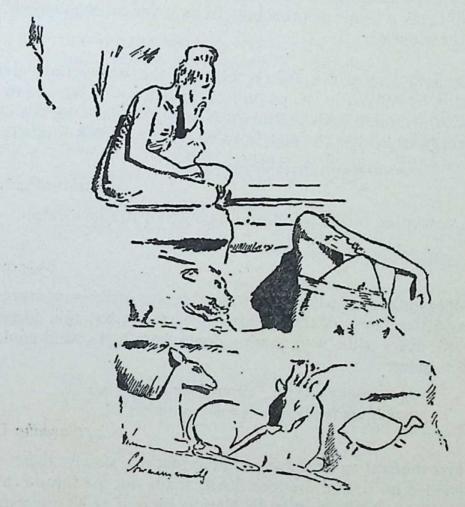


Fig. 21 Emaciated rishi in penance, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.

In fact Kālidāsa almost creates a Vedic hymn through the mouth of Kanva, as a psalm of blessing when Śakuntalā goes to her husband's home. He asks the Vaitāna fires, with the sacrificial place of the altar well arranged, having kuśa grass spread all around the edges and provided with holy twigs, remove all sin and evil by the pleasing odour of the clarified butter (havya) offered to them to protect her:

अमी वेदि परितः क्लृप्तिघष्ण्याः सिमद्वन्तः प्रान्तसंस्तीर्गादर्भाः । ग्रपन्नन्तो दुर्रितं हव्यगन्धैर्वेतानास्त्वां वह्नयः पावयन्तु ॥ Abhijāānaśākuntalam 4,7.

This is not a regular Vedic hymn as such from any of the Vedas, but the firm faith of Kālidāsa in the tremendous potential in the creative speech of the highest order in the rishis, has made him almost create this as a hymn approaching in its grandeur the original Vedic hymns themselves.

The grandeur of the *rishis* is seen by the description given so graphically by Māgha in the picture of the descent of Nārada to meet Krishņa in Dvārakā in his palace. As Krishņa watched, he saw descending right from heaven the sage born of Hiranyagarbha himself:

ददर्शावतरन्तमम्बराद्विरण्यग्भाङ्गभुवं मुनि हरिः।

Śiśupālavadha 1, 1.

Nārada according to the tradition was born of Brahmā's lap:

उत्संगान्नारदो जज्ञे दक्षोंऽगुष्ठात् स्वयम्भुवः।

Bhāgavata

The people looked on with wonder, as the rays of the sun move eastwards and the flames of the fire always blaze up, but this lustre that enveloped every side was coming down from high, what could it be was the wonder:

> गतं तिरक्चीनमनूरुसारथेः प्रसिद्धमूर्ध्वज्वलनं हिवर्भुजः। पतत्यधो धाम विसारि सर्वतः किमेतदित्याकुलमीक्षितं जनैः।।

Śiśupālavadha 1, 2.

It was first thought to be a mass of illumination, slowly there was a form revealed in it, and the lord finally made out the form as human, which ultimately turned out to be Nārada himself as he understood it:

चयस्त्विषामित्यवधरितं पुरा ततः शरीरीति विभाविताकृतिम् । विभुविभक्तावयवं पुमानिति क्रमादमुं नारद इत्यवोधि सः ॥ Śiśupālavadha 1, 3.

In the context of his descent from the blue clouds, himself immaculately white like concentrated camphor dust, he looked like Siva himself with the white ashes smeared on his body against the dark elephant hide as his backdrop:

नवानधोऽधो बृहत: पयोधरान् समूढकपू रपरागपाण्डुरम् । क्षरां क्षणोत्क्षिप्तगजेन्द्रकृत्तिना स्फुटोपमं भूतिसितेन शम्भुना ॥ Śiśupālavadha 1, 4.

Nārada looked again like the autumnal moon with his jaṭās golden like lotus filaments, like the golden creepers growing on the majestic snow-clad mountain:

दधानमम्भोरुहकेसरद्युतीर्जटाः शरच्चन्द्रमरीचिरोचिषम् । विपाकपिङ्गास्तुहिनस्थलीरुहो धराधरेन्द्रं व्रततीततीरिव ॥ Śiśupālavadha 1, 5:

With a brownish waist band of muñja grass on a white body of the tint of the Arjuna tree, wearing an upper garment of jet dark deer skin, he seemd to emulate the fair form of Balarāma, with the lower garment of dark bluish silk and golden waist zone:

पिशङ्गमौञ्जीयुजमर्जु नच्छवि वसानमेणाजिनमंजनद्युति । सुवर्णसूत्राकलिताधराम्बरं विडम्बयन्तं शितिवाससस्तनुम् ।। Sisupālavadha 1, 6.

He looked also like the white autumnal cloud completely snowwhite, with lightning streaks on it, wearing as he did the sacred thread (yajñopavīta) composed of threads of golden creepers, lengthy like the golden feathers of the lord of birds, Garuḍa:

विहङ्गराजाङ्गरुहैरिवायतैर्हिरण्मयोर्वीरुहविल्लितन्तुभिः । कृतोपवीतं हिमशुभ्रमुच्चकैर्धनं घनान्ते तिडतां गर्गौरिव ॥ Sisupālavadha 1, 7.

This gives an idea of the sublimity to which the *rishis* could go. Nārada is introduced by Bhāsa as the most famous in the three worlds, usually sojourning in heaven, and frequently moving out

from his main place of Brahmaloka, his paternal home, to create quarrels on earth, quarrels intended not for disaster but for the good of the world, as sometimes even misunderstanding helps the best of understanding and all is well that ends well, as Nārada is capable of ending things exceedingly well:

अहं गगनसंचारी त्रिषु लोकेषु विश्रुतः। अहालोकादिह प्राप्तो नारदः कलहप्रियः।।

Bālacharita 1

Nārada is the foremost of the category of devarishis or celestial sages. A Chola sculpture from the temple of Naṭarāja at Chidambaram gives us a glimpse of Nārada with the lute that is ever in his hand to offer musical prayer (Fig. 22).

There are categories of sages, rishis, brahmarishis, rājarishis, maharishis and devarishis. The grandeur of Nārada described by Māgha would give an idea of a devarishi. Among the maharishis, Vyāsa Bādarāyana, Krishņadvaipāyana as he is also called, is considered no less than Vishņu himself. In fact, in the Bhagavadgītā, in the vibhūti adhyāya, just as the lord mentions he is Nārada among devarishis, devarīshīnām cha nāradah, he is Vyāsa among the munis, मुनीनामप्यहं न्यासः क्वीनामुग्रना कविः, he is also Kavi or Šukra among the learned ones. Other well-known devarishis are Tumburu, Bharata, Parvata and Devala. Among the Siddhas, another category of rishis, he is Kapila: सिद्धानां किया मुनिः and he is Brihaspati, also a sage, among the highest priests:

पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ वृहस्पतिम् ।

Bhagavadgītā 10, 24.

The glory of Vyāsa is that according to the well known maxim he is Brahmā without the four faces, Vishņu without the additional pair of arms and Śiva just devoid of the third eye in the forehead.

अचतुर्वदनो ब्रह्मा द्विबाहुरपरो हरिः। अफाललोचनः शम्भुर्भगवान् बादरायणः।।

His description has been given in the Mahābhārata almost at the commencement, as a word picture. He is dark like the laden cloud with his brown jaṭās tied up, tall, staff in hand, wearing the skin of the black buck as his upper garment, foremost among seers, purifying

by his look all the worlds, the son of Parāśara, revealing himself in each one of the eighteen divisions of the Mahābhārata:

अभ्रश्यामः पिगजटाबाद्धकलापः प्रांशुर्दण्डी कृष्णमृगत्वग्परिधानः। साक्षाल्लोकान् पावयमानः कित्रमुख्यः पाराशर्यः पर्वसु रूपं विदधातु ॥

This verse in the southern recension of the Mahābhārata has very early in the Christian era travelled abroad and is found in the Balinese text edited by Professor Sylvain Levi. The description of both Vyāsa and Vālmīki as two outstanding rishis has been given in the Vishņudharmottara. In the Vishņudharmottara Vyāsa is described as 'dark-hued, of emaciated form, tawny in his tied up locks of hair and attended by his four disciples Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila and Vaiśampāyana:

कृष्णः कृशतनुर्व्यासः पिंगलातिजटाधरः । सुमन्तुर्जेमिनिः पैलो वैशंयायन एव च ॥ तस्य शिष्यास्तु कर्तव्याश्चत्वारः परिपार्श्वयोः ॥

Vishnudharmottara 3, 85, 65-66

Śankara himself quotes from the Vishņupurāņa to give the glory of Vyāsa identified with Vishņu. Who else except Krishņadvaipāyana Vyāsa who is no other than the lord Nārāyaṇa with charming lilywhite eyes could accomplish the writing of an epic like the Mahā-bhārata:

कृष्णद्वैपायनं व्यासं विद्धि नारायणं प्रभुन् । को ह्यन्यः पुण्डरीकाक्षान्महाभारतकृद्भवेत् ॥

Vishnupurāna 3, 4,5.

It is indeed a great good fortune that there is the portrait of Vyāsa not only with his four disciples but also with Śankara as a young boy of supreme intellect seated close to the sage in panels flanking the supreme teacher Dakshiṇāmūrti in a carving in a Pallava temple of the 8th century at Kānchīpuram (Fig. 23)

As Māgha has described Nārada, Bhāravi has given a vivid pen picture of the form of Vyāsa, who approaches suddenly Yudhishṭhira in distress, exiled to live in sylvan surroundings in Dvaitavana. Even as Yudhishṭhira was counselling the greatly agitated Bhīma on the right course of action, there came on the scene Vyāsa, the son of

Parāśara, as if it was the realisation of the very fruit that was desired by the Pāṇḍavas:

अनुशासतिमत्यनाकुलं नयक्त्मीकुलमर्जुनाग्रजम् । स्वयमर्थं इवाभिवाञ्छितस्तमभीयाय पराशरात्मजः ॥

Kirātārjunīya 2, 54.

With his sweet looks conveying the lesson of peace and tranquillity to even the unruly animals and shining bright with a blaze that could burn all sins, and yet so beautiful to behold:

> मधुरैरवशानि लम्भयन्नपि तिर्यञ्चि समं निरीक्षितैः । परितः पटु विभ्रदेनसां दहनं धाम विलोकनक्षमम् ॥

> > Kirātārjunīya 2, 55.

Approaching suddenly that source of penance, remote from all evil, the sage appeared like a huge heap of merit in bodily form, as the king viewed him with wonder:

> सहसोपगतः सविस्मयं तपसां सूतिरसूतिरापदाम् । दद्शे जगतीभुजा मुनिः स वपुष्मानिव पुण्यसंचयः ॥

> > Kirātārjunīya, 2, 56.

Lustrous with scintillating rays spreading all around, looked the very picture of Jupiter in the presence of the moon and looked as beautiful:

तन्वन्तमिद्धमभितो गुरुमंशुजालं लक्ष्मीमुवाह सकलस्य शशाङ्कमूर्तेः ।

Kirātārjunīya 2, 59

The importance of Vyāsa is such that at the commencement of the Venīsamhāra in one of the early verses, the Sūtradhāra, though it is almost unnecessary to bring in Vyāsa, has specially recorded his salutations to Krishnadvaipāyana Vyāsa, whom he describes as though dark, he is tainted neither red by attachment to cravings nor dark by evil, being free from both and ethically immaculate, and an ocean that produced the nectar called Bhārata, which has to be drunk not by the mouth but through the ears:

श्रवणाञ्जलिपुटपेंयं विरचितवान् भारतख्यममृतं यः । तमहमरागमकृष्णं कृष्णद्वैपायनं वन्दे ॥

Venīsamhāra 1, 4.

This gives the form as well as the great poetic creation of Vyāsa, which Śankara has already affirmed with wonder as possible only from this sage that was no other than Vishņu himself in another form. Bāṇa compares him to Brahmā himself, a veritable Brahmā among poets, whose knowledge is unsurpassed being of the nature of omniscience, and who could, by a shower of noble speech (Sarasvatī) create the sacred epic *Bhārata* like the subcontinent of Bhārata with the river Sarasvatī as its holy landmark:

नमः सर्वविदे तस्मै व्यासाय कविवेधसे। चक्रे पुण्यं सरस्वत्या यो वर्षमिव भारतम्।।

Harshacharita 1, 4.

The Kāshmīri Kshemendra, one of the greatest medieval poets, a prodigious writer with such major works like the Rāmāyanamañjarī, Bhāratamañjart, Brihatkathāmañjarī and Avadānakalpalatā, in addition to his several delightful little skits, sonnets, poems, gnomic, didactic, satiric, that inspire, amuse and delight, that proclaims himself with an additional title Vyāsadāsa, has towards the end of his Bhāratamañjarī, paid a magnificent tribute to the form and composition of Vyāsa in a string of verses. He describes this as the form of Vyāsa as he saw in a dream where he was directed by him to write this noble work. Salutation to Krishnadvaipāyana, the sage dark in hue, but immaculate white in lustre, who bears a collection of tawny locks (jatās) like the surging flames of fire of supreme knowledge. Salutation to the one whose face shines with a light like the bright pollen of the goddess of speech ever in his mouth lit up in mottled colours by the hue of his shining beard and moustaches. Salutation to the one whose eyes appear like lamps dipelling the darkness of the three worlds by his drinking up and offering the light of the sun even as he sets at twilight. Salutation to the huge tree of the garden of dharma with a thousand boughs, flowers establishing ethical principles and shining bright with fruit assuring bliss. Salutation to the one who dwells in the heavenly garden of discrimination wearing the dark antelope skin, that suggests him as it were by its white and dark hue as swarmed by dark black honey bees in their fasination for the fragrance of the highest merit he represents. Salutation to the one adorned by the sacred thread looking white like the lunar streak like Brahmā of lotus-abode pervaded by the white hue of the swan. Salutation to the full moon from the ocean of all sciences and literature filled to the brim by the several streams of a variety of knowledge, the essence of ambrosial liquid and the progenitor of all poetic activity. Salutation to the abode of truth who shines by his own lustre, the abode of penance, the remover of the fatigue of cycles of births and deaths, to the great sage Vyāsa, salutation. Kshemendra calls it Vyāsāshṭakastotra, a hymn composed of eight verses in adoration of Vyāsa;

नमो ज्ञानानलशिखापुञ्जपिङ्गजटाभृते। कृष्णाय कृष्णमहसे कृष्णद्वैपायनाय ते ॥ नमस्तेजोमयरमश्रप्रभाशवलितत्विषे । वक्त्रवागीश्वरीपदमरजसेवोदितश्रिये।। नमः सन्ध्यासमाधाननिष्पीतरवितेजसे । त्रैलोक्यतिमिरोच्छेददीपप्रतिमचक्षपे ॥ नमः सहस्रशाखाय धर्मोपवनशिखने। सत्त्वप्रतिष्ठपूष्पाय निर्वाणफलशालिने ।। नमः कृष्णाजिनजुषे बोधनन्दनवासिने । व्याप्तायेवालिजालेन पुण्यसौरभलिप्सया।। शशिकलाकारब्रह्मसूत्रांश्रशोभिने। श्रिताय हंसकान्त्येव संपर्कात्कमलीकसः ॥ नमो विद्यानदीपूर्णशास्त्राव्धिसकलेन्दवे । पीयपरससाराय कविव्यापारवेघसे ॥ नमः सत्यनिवासाय स्वविकाणविलासिने । व्यासाय धाम्रे तपसां संसारायासहारिणे ॥

Bhāratamañjarī p. 850.851, 13-20.

It is no wonder therefore that Vyāsa is shown with his disciples seated on either side of the lord of all learning, Siva as Dakshiṇāmūrti, in the central main niche of a Pallava temple Airāvaṇeśvara in Kāñchīpuram, with Śaṅkara as a little boy whom he encouraged to write his first bhāshya on the Vishṇusahasranāma, one of the most important portions of the Mahābhārata as a maiden attempt at writing learned commentaries on other larger texts.

Vālmīki similarly is described as fair in complexion, almost overpowering sight by his huge bundled up jaṭās, ever lost in penance, the very picture of patience and peace, emaciated in form, but lustrous: गौरस्तु कार्यो वाल्मीकिर्जटामण्डलदुर्वृशः।
तपस्यभिरतः शान्तो न कृशो न च पीवरः॥

Vishnudharmottara 3, 85, 64.

Though unfortunately there is no sculpture of Vālmīki in India there is a temple for him in a far off village Tra Kieu in Annam and equated with Simhapura, the ancient capital of Champā. This is again an early tradition, a tradition following the dictum of this text which is again thus proven to be far anterior to the eighth century.

Kālidāsa cannot but recall the surge of compassion in this sage's heart, whose grief at the death of the Krauncha bird at the hands of a cruel hunter that shot one of the loving pair spurt into poetry (Fig. 24):

तामभ्यगच्छद्रुदितानुसारी कविः कुशेष्माहरणाय यातः। निषादविद्धाण्डजुदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः॥

Raghuvamśa 14, 70

and enabled him to create a poetic panacea for all the ills of the world, to alleviate human misery by indicating the ethical way of life, that has built up the character of every Indian from his childhood by constant thought on the noble qualities of Rāma.

Bhavabhūti equally pays a tribute to Vālmīki. Vālmīki is not only a great sage but is the forerunner of all poets that composed the life history of the lord of Raghus ever so purifying, and my utterances, as an ardent devotee of that sage have followed suit: may the fortunate ones with mind ever so pleasant listen:

प्राचेतसो मुनिवृषा प्रथमः कवीनां यत्पावनं रघुपतेः प्रणिनाय वृत्तम् । भक्तस्य तत्र समरंसत मेऽपि वाचस्तत् सुप्रसन्नमनसः कृतिनो भजन्तु ॥ Mahāvīracharita 1, 7.

The description of the form of Kasyapa in rigorous penance is an even more awe-inspiring pen picture. Being in such deep meditation, he is oblivious of the surroundings and is unaware of the state of his body itself, overgrown with earth and vegetation, scorched by heat and become a habitat of birds and reptiles. This great sage, situated facing the solar orb, is unquiveringly firm like a post, his body half-buried in an anthill, the chest with dried up reptile slough fast stuck on it, the neck almost choked by coils of several dried creepers, and with a large bundle of matted hair sprawling the entire expanse of the shoulders interspersed by the nests of birds built on them:

> वल्मीकार्घनिमञ्जमूर्तिरुरसा संदष्टसर्पत्वचा कण्ठे जीर्णलताप्रतानवलये नात्यर्थसंपीडितः । अंसव्यापि शकुंन्तनीडिनचयं विश्रज्जटामण्डलं यत्र स्थारण्रिवाचलो मुनिरसावभ्यकेविम्वं स्थितः ॥

> > Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 11

This naturally creates amazement in Dushyanta who sees a whole troop of sages engaged in such severe penance in such a pleasant and dazzling celestial atmosphere of prosperity and delight, caring little for such ephemeral pleasures. These sages are performing severe penance in a spirit of renouncement, in the very place where there are those very objects for obtaining which others practice asceticism, choosing to sustain themselves on just air as food though in a forest of Kalpa trees that offer dainties according to ones desire, bathing and performing religious ablutions in water of pinkish hue by the pollen of golden lotuses growing in them, lost in meditation seated on slabs of precious rocky gems, in complete self control in the very presence of celestial nymphs that here abound:

प्राणानामनिलेन वृत्तिरुचिता सत्कल्पवृक्षे वने तोये काञ्चनपद्मरेणुकपिशे धर्माभिषेकिकया। ध्यानं रत्नशिलातलेषु विबुधस्त्रीसंनिधौ संयमो यत्काङ्क्षन्ति तपोभिरन्यमुनयस्तिस्मँस्तपस्यन्त्यमी॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 12.

The description of Agastya in his āśrama, surrouned by so many other distinguished sages, himself the most conspicious among them all, is clearly given by Vālmīki, when a disciple of his announces the arrival of Rāma to him. Agastya is described as unassailable by his penance, being the foremost of the sages:

स प्रविश्य मुनिश्रेष्ठं तपसा दुष्प्रधर्षणम् ।

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 12, 6

and when Rama enters with his wife and brother, Sītā and Laksh-

mana, he remarks to his brother, 'Look Lakshmana! Here the revered sage Agastya is coming to welcome us! By his extraordinary noble bearing, I am able to place him among these noble sages:'

एष लक्ष्मण निष्कामत्यगस्त्यो भगवान् ऋषिः । औदार्येणावगच्छामि निधंन तपसामिमम् ॥

Rāmāyana 3, 12, 23.

Agastya (Fig. 25) is so great that Kālidāsa waxes eloquent in describing the potential of his great asceticism. In the context of the Pāṇḍya prince as one of the suitors in the svayamvara of princess Indumatī, Sunandā describes how Agastya's graciousness marks the prosperity of the Pāṇḍya monarch, Agastya who stopped the growth of the monumental mountain Vindhya, who drank up without a drop of remainder and poured forth again the waters of the mighty ocean, and who affectionately approached the monarch after the bath completing every horse sacrifice he performed to enquire whether the ceremonies had gone off very well and he had had a happy concluding bath:

विन्ध्यस्य संस्तम्भयिता महाद्रेनिःशेषपीतोजिभतिसंघुराजः । प्रीत्याश्वमेधावभृतार्द्रमूर्तेः सौस्नातिको यस्य भवत्यगस्त्यः ॥

Raghunamsa 6, 61.

Again, in the context of Rāma's return to Ayodhyā in the aerial car, as he approached the abode of Agastya down below and as he saw it, Kālidāsa makes him point it to Sītā, and with great reverence tell her that this was the chosen spot of that great sage, who by a mere knit of his brow could fall Nahusha from his high position of Indra, who was the cause of the purification of the utmost turbidity in waters, and having smelt the smoke of the three fires from the hermitage of this impeccably famous great sage filled with the fragrance of the clarified butter that filled the entire path of the heavenly course of the aerial car and thereby with his mind free from all morbidity enjoyed a lightness of ethical spirit:

भूभेदमात्रेण पदान्मधोंनः प्रभ्रंशयां यो नहुषं चकार । तस्याविलाम्भःपरिशुद्धिहेतोभौंमो मुनेः स्थानपरिग्रहोऽयम् ॥ त्रेताग्निधूमाग्रमनिन्द्यकीर्तेस्तस्येदमाकान्तविमानमार्गम् । घ्रात्वा हविर्गन्धि रजोविमुक्तः समश्तुते मे लिघमानमात्मा ॥

Raghuvamśa 13, 36-37.

In this same context Bhavabhūti describes Rāma in the aerial car pointing to Sītā the hermitage of Agastya, recalling him and his great exploits, the ocean seen down below not far away that was reduced to a desert of sand by his single sip, the Vindhya mountain further up whose expansion was equally stopped abruptly, and the dreaded demon Vātāpī's body roasted and digested in the abdominal fire of the sage who could not be a theme for description, his impossible exploits defying all narration:

अयं वारां राशिः किल मरुरभूचद्विलसितै-रयं विन्ध्यो येनाहृतविहृतिराध्मानमजहात्। विलिल्ये यत्कुक्षिस्थितशिखिनि वातिपवपुषा स कासां वाणीनां मुनिरकलितात्मासु विषयः॥

Mahāvīracharitā 7, 14

Bana waxes still more eloquent in a magnificent description of Agastva in the context of his hermitage on the banks of the running stream of the Godavari with the verdure all around rendered parrotgreen by luxurious plantain growth and shade everywhere, the stream itself appearing as if anxiously running towards the river drunk by the pitcher-born sage Agastya, famous in all the worlds; the very place of the origin of revered dharma itself, who, on the appeal of the gods, drank up the entire expanse of water of the ocean; whose command to stop growing could not be transgressed even by the mighty Vindhya mountain, that out of competition with the noble mountain Meru, spread out his magnificant peaks heavenward in space in an attempt to obstruct the path of the solar chariot on its march, defying the arguments of all the celestials; who had digested in his abdominal fire the dreaded demon Vātāpī; particles of dust on whose feet were kissed by the tips of the makara decoration on the crowns of the celestials and the demons; associated particularly with the southern quarter; who had by a single fiery sound in anger thrown out from the fair territory of heaven the blazing glory of Nahusha himself; the adorable sage of immense potential:

> तस्यां च दण्डकारण्याण्तःपाति, सकलभुवनविख्यातं, उत्पत्तिक्षेत्रिमव भगवतो धर्मस्य, सुरपतिप्रार्थनापीतसकलसागरजलस्य, मेरुमत्सरा-द्रगनतलप्रसारितविकटणिरःसहस्रोण दिवसकर्रथगमनपथमपने-तुमभ्युद्यतेनावगणितसकलसुरवचसा विन्ध्यगिरिणाप्यनुल्लिङ्घता-

ज्ञस्य, जठरानलजीर्णवातापिदानवस्य, सुरासुरमुकुटमकरपत्रकोटि-चुम्वितचरणरजसो दक्षिणामुखिविशेषकस्य, सुरलोकादेकहुंकार निपातितनहुषप्रकटप्रमावस्य भगवतो महामुनेरगस्त्यस्य..... दिशि दिशि शुकहरितैश्च कदलीवनैः श्यामलीकृतपरिसरं सरिता च कलशयोनिपरिपीतसागरमार्गानुगतयेव बद्धवेणिकया गोदावर्या परिगताश्रमपदमासीत ।

Kādambarī 1, pp-41-42.

The greatness of Agastya is all the more by the fact that the lord who came on earth, Rāma, the finale of the glory of the prosperity of the ten-headed monster Rāvaṇa, following with deep respect the way of the great sage Agastya, whom he revered ever so much, lived happily along with his wife Sītā for a while in his vicinity in Pañchavaṭī, in a beautiful hermitage built by Lakshmaṇa, Rāma who had abandoned an empire to protect the word of his father Daśaratha:

यत्र च दशरथवचनमनुपालयन्नुत्सृष्टराज्यो दशवदनलक्ष्मीविभ्रम-विरामो रामो महामुनिमगस्त्यमनुचरन् सह सीतया लक्ष्मणो-परचितरुचिरपर्णशालः पञ्चबद्घां कंचित्कालं सुखमुवास। Kādambarī 1, p. 43.

Under Asambhava, the figure of speech 'impossible', Appayya Dīkshita gives a verse as example, which vividly describes the amazing power of sage Agastya that could accomplish the least expected 'impossible'. Counting on this as the one store of water and the receptable of all the gems, the occan has been sought by us, with our minds thumping with a thirst of desire; who could know this that a sage would, in a second, sip this up with all its teeming whales and crocodiles in a single gulp from the hollow of his palm:

अयं वारामेको निलय इति रत्नाकर इति श्रितोऽस्माभिस्तृष्णातरिलतमनोभिर्जलनिधिः। क एवं जानीते निजकरपुटीकोटरगतं क्षणादेनं ताभ्यतिमिमकरमापास्यति मृनिः॥

Kuvalayānanda 83, p. 109.

Nīlakantha Dīkshita, in describing the Dakshināmūrti form of Siva as the paramaguru (Master at source) of innumerable sages of eminence, specially refers to the preeminence of Agastya, who is just one of the many such (Fig. 26), Agastya, who by a single gulp swallowed the ocean; the abode of Vishnu himself, whose navel bore

the lotus from which was born Brahmā who created the entire universe:

यः स्रष्टा जगतां यतोऽयमभवत्तद्यस्य नाभेरभू-च्छेते यत्र सतं च यश्च लुक्यांचके सहान्यैः क्षणात् । तादृक्षाः शतशः पुराणमुनयो यच्छिष्यवर्गे स्थिताः स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नाऽपि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 23.

The commentator on this verse Sivānandatīrtha quotes from the Skāndapurāṇa describing the intense devotion to Siva of Agastya, whose very command, made after smearing himself with the sacred ashes (vibhūti), symbol of Siva's ascetic powers, brought the entire ocean as if it were just a dew drop into the hollow of his palm, even as he contemplated on Siva:

समुद्रतीरमासाद्य भस्मादायभिमंत्रितम् । धृत्वा ललाटकरयोरालोडच सहसा ऋषिः ॥ आजुहावांबुधि पाणि प्रसार्यं स महामुनिः । तदानीं चागतं चाव्धि करे नीहरविंदुवत् ॥ प्राशयामास तं ध्यात्वा महादेवं ऋषीश्वरः ।

Skāndamahāpurāņa, upadešakāņda 12, 45-48

This supreme power that he derives from Siva makes him comparable almost to the Supreme One that determines every happening in this world and is styled fate or providence.

Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita hence styles him the destiny of the ocean that could be so sipped up. Who can dare to comprehend the sporting spirit of almighty Fate, if first into the hollow of the palm and then into the sage himself went the vast expanse of the waters of the ocean, whose son is the king of the entire world of Brāhmaṇas, and who is the abode of Hari, whose lotus feet are the refuge of the universe:

राजा विप्रकुलस्य यस्य तनयः सोमः स वारां निधि-यः सर्वाश्रयणीयपादकमलस्तस्याश्रयोऽयं हरेः। आनीतश्चलुकं स एव चुलकेऽप्यन्तः प्रवेश्येत चेत् कः संवेदित्मीहते भगवतः कालस्य लीलायितम।।

Anyāpadeśaśataka 54.

Nīlakantha Dīkshita so amazed at the sipping of the ocean by

Agastya, could yet think of almost similar exploits in two other sages of tremendous potential. He thinks of the one who could create a new heaven and a fresh Indra as its overlord, and mightier still a sage who could just make his rod gulp up a myriad missiles aimed at him without the least effort to stop them by himself, and finally philosophises whether they could have any peers. He wonders whether any more would be born like them among the legions of celestials or the highest of the Brāhmaṇas with knowledge of the Supreme One to peer with the one who sipped up the entire mass of oceanic water, or who created a veritable rival to heaven, or who by a single staff of his engulfed all the powerful missiles and arrows aimed at him:

येनाचान्तः सिललिनिचयो येन सृष्टा प्रतिद्योः शस्त्राण्यस्त्रण्यपि कविलतान्येकया यस्य यष्टचा । कस्तादृक्षः प्रभवतु जनो देवभूदेववर्गे कालः कीटानिव कक्लयामास तानप्ययत्नम् ॥

Śāntivilāsa 37.

Agastya, Viśvāmitra and Vaśishtha are thereby glorified.

The story narrates how Viśvāmitra, who had promised Triśanku entry into heaven, finding Indra dropping him out, enraged, created by the power of his own penance, a rival heaven adjacent to heaven itself, with him to rule as its overlord. Thrown out of heaven by Indra, as unfit to be there cursed by his own preceptor, he fell head downwards crying for help to Viśvāmitra, the treasure-house of penance; hearing his wail, Kausika, roused to mighty rage, cried 'halt and stay' and himself looking almost a new creator shining beyond all among the sages assembled, started creating another set of seven sages in the southerly direction, a whole garland of stars and constellations and, beside himself with rage, he pronounced that he would create another Indra or the world could go without Indra if necessary, and earnestly he began fashioning so many celestials; and now, greatly agitated, the host of seven rishis, the celestials and the demons spoke sweet coaxing words to the mighty Viśvāmitra gently pointing out that Triśanku cursed by his preceptor could not really go with his own impure body to heaven; realising the verity in their word, the great sage explained to the sages and celestials how he could not go back on his word even

if it were an impossibility when he had promised king Triśanku that he would with this body of his go to heaven. Let him be there in this body for ever in this new heaven, and let the stars and illuminations be also there eternally as my creations, and as long as the worlds last let them also continue; he finally requested that they all should also agree to this. Explained thus by him, the sages and celestials all agreed with one voice:

गुरुशापहतो मूढ पत भूमिमवाविशराः। एवम्को महेन्द्रेण त्रिशङ्कुरपतत्पुनः ॥ विकोशमानस्त्राहीति विश्वामित्रं तपोधनम्। तच्छु त्वा वचंन तस्य कोशमानस्य कौशिकः ॥ क्रोधमाहारयत्तीवं तिष्ठ तिष्ठेति चाववीत्। ऋषिमध्ये स तेजस्वी प्रजापतिरिवापरः॥ स्जन् दक्षिणामार्गस्थान् सप्तर्षीनपरान् पुनः । नक्षत्रमालामपरामसजत्त्रोधमूर्च्छितः ॥ दक्षिणां दिशामास्थाय मुनिमध्ये महातपाः । स्टवा नक्षत्रवंशं च कोघेन कल्पीकृतः॥ अन्यमिन्द्रं करिष्यामि लोको वा स्यादनिन्द्रकः । दैवतान्यपि स कोघात्स्रध्टं समूपचक्रमे ॥ ततः परमसंभ्रान्तः सर्विसङ्घः स्रास्राः। विश्वामित्रं महात्मानमूचु: सानुनयं वच: ॥ अयं राजा महाभाग गुरुशापपरिक्षत:। सशरीरो दिव यातुं नार्हत्येव तपोधन।। तेषां तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा देवानां मूनिप्गव: । अबबीत्समहद्वाक्यं कौशिक: सर्वदेवता: ॥ सशरीरस्य भद्रं वस्त्रिशंकोरस्य भपते:। आरोहणं प्रतिज्ञाय नानृतं कर्त् मृत्सहे ॥ स्वर्गोस्त सशरीरस्य त्रिशंकोरस्य शाश्वत:। नक्षत्राणि च सर्वाणि मामकानि घ्रवाण्यथ ॥ यावल्लोका धारिष्यन्ति तिष्ठन्त्वेतानि सर्वशः। स्रा: सर्वे तदन्ज्ञात्मर्हथ ॥ एवम्का: सुरा: सर्वे प्रत्यूचुम् निपुङ्गवम् । एवं भवत् भद्रं ते तिष्ठन्त्वेतानि सर्वश: ।।

Rāmāyaņa 1, 60, 18-30.

A sculpture of Trivikrama from a Pāṇḍya cave at Nāmakkal, closely following an earlier Pallava panel of the same theme at Mahābalipuram, in depicting the heavenward raised foot of the

Lord, shows Triśańku falling head downward toppled from above (Fig. 27), when he is stopped to rule in the new heaven created by Viśvāmitra by the power of his penance.

The other, Vasishtha, when attacked by Visvāmitra, who was intent on taking away Sabalā the celestial cow from that great sage. realised the utter impotency of Kshatriya warriorhood and power before the lustre of the supreme sage Vasishtha whose brahmavarchas was enough to ward off all the missiles. The venerable Vasishtha, lifted up his Brāhmanical staff (brahmadanda) like another club of Death itself, and in great anger exclaimed thus, On kinsman of Kshatriva! I am here; you may now display your strength as the son of Gādhi: I shall destroy your pride of knowledge of missiles; where is all your Kshatriya strength and might and where the greater Brāhma strength: Oh! blot on the Kshatriya race! witness now my divine Brāhma power (brahmabala). And the terrible missile of Agni aimed by the son of Gādhi was extinguished by the brahmadanda of Vasishtha like the blaze of fire by a stream of water; similarly the Vāruna missile, Raudra, Aindra, Pāśupata, Aishīka, all of which the son of Gādhi aimed in anger, including the Manava, the benumbing Mohana, Gandharva that puts to sleep, Jrimbhana that tears, Mādana that maddens. Santāpana that heats, Vilāpana that melts, Soshana that dries up. Dārana that pierces, unconquerable Vajra, Brāhmapāśa the noose of death. Varunapāśa the tight noose of the waters, Pināka missile, thunderbolt both dry and wet, Dandastra of Yama, Paisacha of ghosts, Krauncha, Dharmachakra, Kalachakra, Vishnuchakra, the burning Vāyavyāstra, the Hayasira missile, the two indomitable Śaktis, Kankāla and Musala, the great missile Vidyādhara, the dreaded Kālāstra, the frightful Triśūla, Kapāla, Kankana, all these were used by him against Vasishtha, the best of the meditative seers, and they indeed appeared wonderful as they were all caught on his staff by this great sage, son of Brahmā himself; and when the power of all of them was extinguished and lost, the son of Gādhi used the Brahmāstra. At this the celestials headed by Agni, the celestial sages, Gandharvas. Nāgas, in short all the three worlds, got frightened. Yet, even that terrible Brahmāstra was received by the lustre of Brahmā in Vasishtha on that staff itself; and as it was so caught the staff, assumed a form that produced wonder to the three worlds as the fearful Trailakvamohana and from every hair root of that great rishi Vasishtha sparked forth blazes of fire raising smoke. The brahmadanda staff itself burst into flames like Kālāgni smoking or another club of Yama, when all the sages extolled Vasishtha, the greatest of them all, unassailable in his Brāhmanical glory. Oh lord! control by your own lustre! You have surely put down the mighty Viśvāmitra. Please be gracious. Oh greatest among sages! may the worlds get over their fears! So beseeched, the great sage came back to his peaceful position. Also defeated, Viśvāmitra said with a deep sigh 'Fie on the strength of the Kshatriya, the strength of the lustre of Brāhma is the strength; by the single brahmadanda all my missiles have been put down. Having observed all this, with my mind now tranquil, I have resolved to attain by great penance that which would give me the Brāhma strength:

इत्युक्तवा परमऋ द्वो दण्डम्द्यम्य सत्वर:। विधममिव कालाग्नि यमदण्डमिवापरम् ॥ एवमक्तो विशव्हिन विश्वामित्रा महावल:। आग्ने यमस्त्रमृतिक्षप्य तिष्ठ तिष्ठेति चात्रवीत् ॥ ब्रह्मदण्डं समृतिक्षप्य कालदण्डमिवापरम । विशिष्ठो भगवान कोधादिदं वचनमन्नवीत्।। क्षत्रबन्धो स्थितोस्म्येप यद्वलं तद्विदर्शय। नाणयाम्येष ते दर्पं शस्त्रस्य तव गाधिज।। वव च ते क्षत्रियवलं क्व च ब्राह्मवलं महत्। पश्य ब्रह्मबलं दिव्यं मम क्षत्रियपांसन ॥ तस्यास्त्रं गाधिप्त्रस्य घोरमाग्नेयमुद्यतम । ब्रह्मदण्डेन तच्छान्तमग्ने वेंग इवाम्भासा ॥ वारुणं चैव रौद्रं च ऐन्द्रं पाञ्चपतं तथा। ऐषीकं चापि चिक्षेप कृपितो गाधिनन्दन: ॥ मानवं मोहनं चैव गान्धवं स्वापनं तथा । जम्भणं मादनं चैव संतापनविलापने ॥ जोषणं दारणं चैव वज्रमस्त्रं सद्र्जयम । ब्रह्मपाशं कालपाशं वारुणं पाशमेव च।। पैनाकास्त्रं च दियतं शुष्कार्द्रे अशनी उभे । टण्डास्त्रमध पैणाचं कीश्वमस्त्रं तथैव च ।। धर्मचकं कालचकं विष्णचकं तथैव च। वायव्यं माथनं चैव अस्त्रं हयशिरस्तथा । जित्रयं च चिक्षेप कंकालं मुसलं तथा। वैद्याघरं महास्त्रं च कालास्त्रमथ दारुणम् ॥

त्रिञ्जलमस्त्रं घोरं च कपालमथ कंकणम्। एतान्यस्त्राणि चिक्षेप सर्वाणि रधनन्दन ॥ वशिष्ठे जपतां श्रेष्ठे तदद्भुतिमवाभवत्। तानि सर्वाणि दण्डेन ग्रसते ब्रह्मण: सुत: ।। तेष शान्तेषु ब्रह्मास्त्रं क्षिप्तवान् गाधिनन्दन: । तदस्त्रमुद्यतं दृष्ट्वा देवा: साग्निपुरोगमा: ॥ देवर्षयश्य संभ्रान्ता गन्धर्वा: समहोरगा: । त्रैलोक्यमासीत्संत्रस्तं ब्रह्मास्ते समुदीरिते ॥ तदप्यस्त्रं महाघोरं ब्राह्मं ब्राह्मेण तेजसा। विशष्ठो ग्रसते सर्वं ब्रह्मदण्डेन राघव।। ब्रह्मास्त्रं ग्रसमानस्य वासिष्ठस्य महात्मनः । त्रैलोक्यमोहनं रौद्रं रूपमासीत्सुदारुणम् ।। रोमक्पेषु सर्वेषु विशष्ठस्य महात्मन:। मरीच्य इव निष्पेत्रग्ने धूँ माकुलाचिष: ।। प्रज्वलद्वह्मदण्डश्च विशष्ठस्य करोद्यत:। विध्म इव कालाग्निर्यमदण्ड इवापर: ॥ ततोऽस्तूवन्म्निगणा वशिष्ठं जपतां वरम । अमेयं ते बलं ब्रह्मन्स्तेजो धारय तेजसा।। निगहीतस्त्वया ब्रह्मन विश्वामित्रो महाबल: । प्रसीद जपताँ श्रेष्ठ लोका: सन्त्र गतन्यथा: ॥ एवमूक्तो महातेजा: शमं चक्रे महातपा:। विश्वामित्रोऽपि निकृतो विनिश्वस्येदमब्रवीत ।। धिग्बलं क्षत्रियबलं ब्रह्मतेजोबलं बलम्। एकेन ब्रह्मदण्डेन सर्वास्त्राणि हतानि मे।। प्रसन्ने न्द्रियमानसः । तदेतत्समवेक्ष्याहं तपो महत् समास्थास्ये यद्वै ब्रह्मत्वकारणम् ॥

Rāmāyana 1, 56, 1-24.

It is this Vasishtha, the preceptor of the Ikshvāku rulers that not only with Vāmadeva coronated Rāma, but also listened to his learned discourse on the highest Truth of the Eternal One (Fig. 28)

There is another in the same category of sages that performed the impossible and that was the royal sage Jahnu issuing from whose ear the celestial river Gangā herself got the name 'daughter of Jahnu'. Kālidāsa never tires of calling the river Jahnukanyā, the daughter of Jahnu:

तीर्थे तोयव्यतिकरभुवे जह्नुकन्यासरय्वोः

Raghuvamśa 8, 95.





Fig. 28. Vasishtha and Vāmadera listening to the discourse of Rāma, Marātha school, Tanjāvur, 18th century A.D., National Museum.

Gangā could be the celestial river that sprang from the holy water vessel (kamandalu) of Brama, sallied forth from the foot of Vishnu himself as Vishnupadī, may have descended on the jatās of Siva and become even his consort to the great chagrin of Parvatī herself, she may have got her own sister Parvatarājakanyakā Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya, as her cowife, herself starting from the peak of the Himālaya to flow downwards: yet, when she roused the ire of Jahnu, absorbed in sacrificial activity as a vajamāna, she was sipped up in a trice (Fig. 29), Ganga, who could fill the ocean over again when Agastya had sipped it up dry, and it is only on the entreaties of Bhagīratha and the Devas that Jahnu graciously released her through his ears, Ganga receiving the appellation Jahnavi, daughter of Jahnu (Fig. 30). Filled with wonder, the celestials from their aerial cars in high, viewed amazed the stream of Ganga flowing after Bhagiratha, led to the place where his ancestors lay as ashes in the nether world, to be purified by this holy stream, the holiest of waters, the noblest of the streams, the destroyer of all sins of whatever magnitude, and thus flowed the river Gangā and went in the direction that Bhagīratha led. On the way where Jahnu the sacrificer was engaged in an amazing sacrifice, Ganga flooded the sacrificial hall and its adjuncts. The great one engaged in sacrifice understood her pride, and wonderfully enough drank up completely the water of the Ganges. At this the celestials, Gandharvas, rishis, all wonder-struck, adored the great Jahnu, the noblest of the noble, beseeched him that Ganga should henceforth be his daughter, and be revived. The lustrous royal sage was pleased and released Gangā through his ears. Hence Gangā is called the daughter of Jahnu or Jāhnavī. She now resumed her course following Bhagīratha to purify his ancestors:

यतो भगीरथो राजा ततो गङ्गा यशस्विनी।
जगाम सरितां श्रेष्ठा सर्वपापप्रणाशिनी।।
ततो हि यजमानस्य जह्नोरद्भुतकर्मण:।
गङ्गा संप्लावयामास यज्ञवाटे महात्मन:।।
तस्यावलेपनं ज्ञात्वा कृद्धो यज्वा तु राधव।
अपिवच्च जलं सर्वं गङ्गाया: परमाद्भुतम्।।

ततो देवा: सगन्धर्वा ऋषयश्च सुविस्मिता: ।
पूजयन्ति महात्मानं जह्नं परुषसत्तमम् ॥
गङ्गां चानुनयन्ति स्म दुहितृत्वे महात्मन: ।
ततस्तुष्टो महातेजा: श्रोत्राभ्यामसृजत्पुन: ॥
तस्माष्जह्नं सुता गङ्गा प्रोच्यते जाह्नवीति च ।
जगाम च पुनर्गङ्गा भगीरथरथानुगा ॥

Rāmāyana 1, 43, 35-40.

The glory of Viśvāmitra is given by Bhavabhūti in the Mahāvīracharita describing the sage Kauśika as the most revered bhagavān (even like bhagavān Vaśishṭha), the disciple of sage Kriśāśva. He is all victorious, and his great good fortune is further indicated by the glory of Rāma, no other than Vishņu incarnate, the conqueror of the victor over the whole Kshatriya race, Paraśurāma, and whose main purpose in life was to remove the fears of others by being the refuge of the entire world; the moon of the family of the sun, and through him to dharma of Kshatra itself was all victorious in the world in the family of the thousand-rayed sun. It is here that Paramātma shows the glory of sages. He himself would be born of a sage, Kaśyapa, as Vāmana, or he would become a disciple of a sage as of Viśvāmitra or Vaśishṭha, and would also subdue a sage run amuck:

कृशाश्वान्तेवासी जयित भगवान् कौशिकमुनिः सहस्रांशोवंशे जगित विजयी क्षत्रमधुना। विनेता क्षत्रारेर्जगदभयदानव्रतधरः शरण्यो लोकानां दिनकरकुलेन्द्रविजयते।।

Mahāvīracharita 4, 1.

But still Bhavabhūti makes it clear that Paraśurāma is not one whom Rāma would regard in the least unreverently or in a manner unworthy. It is rather the other way. Rāma, with his hands clasped in adoration after overcoming him, begs pardon of him, requesting him to graciously forgive the slight lack in behaviour towards him which was purely providential and beyond his control, recalling with reverence that his feet were adored by the highest seers of Vedic thought as he was the foremost in Vedic lore, penance and practice of austerity, being almost an inexhaustible treasure of these:

यद्ब्रह्मवादिभिरुपासितवन्द्यपादे विद्यातपोव्रतिनधौ तपतां वारिष्ठे। दैवात्कृतस्त्विय मया विनयापचारस्तत्र प्रसीद भगवन्नयमञ्जलस्ते।।

Mahāvīracharita 4, 21.

Indeed Parasurama's birth is from the great *rishi* Jamadagni. His master is no other than the mighty revered lord of the celestials, the wielder of the Pināka bow, Śiva; his valour is not to be described in mere words but in his obvious glory on his path of martial action; his spirit of sacrifice rises to the utmost limit of liberality in unexpectant giving away of the entire earth encircled by the seven oceans to sage Kaśyapa; truly what is it that does not transcend the world in this revered sage who is the treasure house of penance and meditation on the Supreme One:

उत्पत्तिर्जमदिश्वतः स भगवान् देवः पिनाकी गुरु-वीर्यं यत्तु न तिद्गरा पिथ ननु व्यक्तं हि तत्कर्मभि: । त्यागः सप्तसमुद्रमुद्रितमहीनिव्याजदानाविधः सत्यं ब्रह्मतपोनिष्येर्भगवतः किं वा न लोकोत्तरम् ।।

Mahāvīracharita 2, 36.

The nobitity of Paraśurāma with all his great attributes is tremendous. In his joy at sighting Rāma, the great hero, still a child, who strangely cnough, instead of rousing his anger for having broken his Master's bow inclines him towards him with affection (Fig. 31); and he wonderingly exclaims within himself, Oh! Rāma! my chest, gnashed on one side by the pestle-like tusk of Gaņeśa himself in his battle with me, marked elsewhere by the wounds of the arrows of Skanda himself, and now horripilated by the sighting of so wonderful a hero in you, truly desires to embrace you:

हेरम्बदन्तमुसलोल्लिखतैकभित्ति वक्षो विशाखविशिखव्रणलांछितं मे । रोमाञ्चकंचुकितमद्भुतवीरलाभाद्यत्सत्यमद्य परिरब्धुमिवेच्छिति त्वाम् ॥ Mahāvīracharita 2, 38.

Parasurāma is one of the incarnations of Vishņu himself as a sage. In the Vishņusahasranāma, Vishņu is described as Brahmaņya, Brahmaķit, Brahmī, Brahmajña and Brāhmaņapriya. It is no worder that he assumed birth as Vāmana from Kasyapa and Aditi and as Parasurāma of Jamadagni and Reņukā. The latter descent on earth was for establishing righteous conduct and punishing of wickedness

in so telling a manner as to put down the power of the Kshatriya race twentyone times over for killing an innocent sage in its cupidity for his celestial cow in the hermitage. He taught a lesson that could never be forgotten. Twentyone times he exterminated the earth of all roots of Kshatriya:

त्रि:सप्तकृत्वो जगतीपतीनां हन्ता गुरुर्यस्य स जामदग्नच:।

Kirātārjunīya 3, 17.

With the blood of the Kshatriyas he created at Samantapañchaka five hradas or lakes to offer handfuls of nivāpāñjali of blood instead of water (Fig. 32).

त्रिःसप्तकृत्वः पृथिवी कृत्वा निःक्षत्रियां प्रभुः । समन्तपञ्चके पञ्च चकार रुधिरहृदान् ॥

Mahābhārata 3,11,7,9.

A sage he was of such lustre of both brahmatejas and kshatriyavīrya. As Māgha has described Nārada slowly emerging in perceptible form a great lustre seen in the sky, there is a description of Paraśurāma vividly given by Kālidāsa, who wonderfully makes the army of Daśaratha first discern a huge heap of lustre and as they rub their eyes to see better, they slowly make out a human form:

तेजस: सपिंद राशिरुत्थित: प्रादुरास किल वाहिनीमुखे।
य: प्रमृज्य नयनानि सैनिकैर्लक्षणीयपुरुषाकृतिश्चिरात्।।

Raghuvamśa 11, 63.

With a sacred thread as a symbol of his father's portion and the mighty bow as that of his mother he appeared like the cool moon along with the fierce sun, like the welcome sandal tree with the fiery snake entwining it:

पित्र्यमंशमुपवीतलक्षणं मातृकं च धनुरूर्जितं दधत्। य: ससोम इव घर्मदीधिति: सिद्धिजिह्व इव चन्दनद्रम: ॥

Raghuvamśa 11, 64.

Obeying the order of his father, whose words were cruel by his ire roused, he even transgressed the fundamental ethical code, and even as his mother was quivering like a leaf, cut off her head, first conquering compassion and then the entire earth:

येन रोषपरुपात्मन: पितु: शासने स्थितिमिदोऽपि तस्थुष: । वेपमानजननीशिरिश्च्छदा प्रागजीयत घृणा ततो मही।। Raghuvamsa 11, 65.

He appeared with the beads of the rosary tucked on his right ear as if counting through them his act of exterminating the Kshatriyas performed twentyone times:

अक्षबीजवलयेन निर्वभौ दक्षिणश्रवणसंस्थितेन य: । क्षत्रियान्तकरणैकर्विशतेर्व्याजपूर्वगणनामिवोद्वहन् ॥

Raghuvamśa 11,66.

The tapasya of the rishis was so potent, that to disturb them was indeed a difficult task for Indra who would ever get frightened when any rishi excelled the lustre of the sun by the power of his penance. There was such a complete sense of renunciation, that the rishis themselves were not very anxious to enjoy even the highest heavenly pleasures. Invited personally by Indra himself with the aerial car brought by him to take him to heaven, Sarabhanga, in his great admiration for the noble qualities of Rama, and in his eagerness to welcome him in his hermitage, which he regarded was the greatest privilege and good fortune in his life, completely disregarding the vimana and the lord of the celestials that were waiting for him, staved on to welcome Rāma. In fact, he tells Rāma that Indra had come to fetch him, but knowing that he was in the vicinity and anxious to welcome him in his hermitage, he had stayed behind. With utmost benevolence born of a great and noble heart, and touched by the sad condition of Rama and Lakshmana, particularly the delicately nurtured Sītā, he offers the great heavenly abodes won by him by his great penance as a gift to Rāma to enable him to enjoy the sweet pleasures of the different celestial worlds:

ततः शकोपयानं तु पर्यपृच्छत्स राघवः ।
शरभङ्गश्च तत्सर्वं राघवाय न्यवेदयत् ॥
मापेष वरदो राम ब्रह्मलोकं निनीषिति ।
जितमुग्रेण तपसा दुष्प्रापमकृतात्मभिः ॥
अहं ज्ञात्वा नरव्याघ्र वर्तमानमदूरतः ।
ब्रह्मलोकं न गच्छामि त्वामदृष्ट्वा प्रियातिथिम् ॥
त्वयाहं पुरुषव्याघ्र धार्मिकेन महात्मना ।
समागम्य गमिष्यामि त्रिदिवं देववंसेवितम् ॥

अक्षया नरशाई ल मया लोका जिताः शुभाः। ब्राह्म्याश्च नाकपृष्ठाचाश्च प्रतिगृह्णीष्व मामकान्।।

Rāmāyana 2,5,28-32.

The *rishi* had not only appreciated Rāma's great character which he placed above his own journey to heaven but was prepared to give away so many of the great *lokas* won by him by the deepest panance. This indeed is always the true spirit of renunciation in a *rishi*. Caring so little for it, Śarabhanga made an offerlng (āhuti) of his body worn out and composed only of skin and bone: and even as Rāma wondered, he entered the fire to be consumed (Fig. 33). This is the way of the ancients. 'Wait and see Oh, Rāma! exclaimed the sage before he entered the fire:

एप पन्था नरव्याद्र मुहूत् पश्य तात माम्। यावज्जहामि गात्राणि जीएाँ त्वचिमवोरगः।। ततोऽग्नि सुसमाधाय हुत्वा चाज्येन मंत्रवित्। शरभङ्गो महातेजाः प्रविवेश हुताशनम्।। तस्य रोमाणि केशं च ददाहाग्निर्महात्मनः। जीएाँ त्वचं तथास्थीनि यच्च मांसं सशोणितम्।। रामस्तु विस्मितो भ्रात्रा भार्यया च सहात्मवान्।

Rāmāyana 2,5,38-41.

Rāma's wonder at the way the sage entered and offered himself in the fire that never faded from his memory, is reflected in his remark to Sītā as he approaches in the aerial car Pushpaka the hermitage once occupied by Śarabhaṅga recalling the never to be forgotten event. This is the purifying penance grove here in front of us, a great refuge as it were to all, hermitage of Śarabhaṅga, who, the very embodiment of purity, tended the fire with offerings of sacred fuel all his life and finally offered his own body consecrated and sanctified over again by the utterance of holy Vedic chantings:

ग्रदः शरण्यं शरभङ्गनाम्नस्तपोवनं पावनमाहितग्नेः। चिराय संतर्प्यं समिद्भिरिग्नं यो मंत्रपूतं तनुमप्यहौषीत्।।

Raghuvamśa 13,45.

The other great sage that Rāma met immediately was Sutīkshņa (Fig. 34). Even while returning by the aerial car Rāma points to Sītā and mentions Sutīkshņa as only sharp in his name but soft and self-

controlled in spirit. His severe penance was such that in the midst of four blazing fires around, and with the scorching sun above as the fifth, burning the forehead of his raised head, he was engaged in penance:

हविर्भु जामेधवतां चतुर्णा मध्ये ललाटंतपसप्तसप्तिः । असौ तपस्यत्यपरस्तपस्वी नाम्ना स्तीक्ष्णश्चिरितेन दान्तः ॥

Raghuvamśa 13,41.

He is a sage of such great self control, unmoved by any pleasurable objects, completely lost in meditation and penance, that Kālidāsa describes Sutīkshņa in the words of Rāma, that the blandishments of the celestial nymphs sent by Indra in his own suspicious fear to wean him from his purpose, were indeed completely ineffective, however alluring their sidelong glances, accompaniments to their alluring smiles and their partially exposed hip bejewelled by the waistzone, intent on corrupt purpose:

अमुं सहासप्रहितेक्षणानि व्याजार्घसंदर्शितमेखलानि । नालं विकर्तं जनितेष्ट्रशङ्कं सुराङ्गनाविभ्रमचेष्टितानि ॥

Raghuvamśa 13,42.

But still the *rishi* has the highest regard for character, and as Rāma moves in the aerial chariot towards Ayodhyā and bows to him, he turns his sight lovingly towards the aerial car for a minute and wedded to taciturnity, graciously nods his head in recognition of his acceptance of his obeisance, but withdraws his eye again to fix it on the thousandrayed sun which is the mode of severe penance. With his left hand ever lifted up in rigorous penance he waves to greet me with the right one encircled by the rosary (akshamālā) on the wrist often used to fondly stroke the pet deer in the hermitage and cut the kuśa grass for ritual.

एपोऽक्षमालावलयं मृगाणां कण्ड्यितरं कुशसूचिलावम् । सभाजने मे भुजमूर्ध्वबाहुः सब्येतरं प्राध्वमितः प्रयुङ्क्ते ॥ वाचंयमत्वात्प्रणति ममैप कम्पेन किंचित्प्रतिगृह्य मूर्ध्नः । दृष्टि विमानव्यवधानमुक्तं पुनः सहस्राचिष संनिधते ॥

Raghuvamśa 13,43-44.

At long last Sarabhanga could at least think of accepting the invitation of Indra to go to the celestial world that he had won by

his severe penance. But a classical instance of one who, invited by Indra by sending his charioteer with the vimana to fetch the sage to heaven as a reward for his great good deeds and penance, rejected the offer politely, as he decided that it was not worth accepting, is Mudgala. The story of Mudgala is indeed a very interesting one. He could stand the test of even the most irascible sage Durvasa in the discharge of a peculiar penance that he was observing, partaking food only once a fortnight with his entire family from only one measure of grain collected by him like a bird, observing the kapotavrata or the mode of the pigeon that picks grain. He would collect for a fortnight, and on the new and full moon days, after duly offering the cooked food to the celestials and the guests, he would partake of it with his family, and spend the rest of the time in the highest penance. Indra himself with other celestials would personally come to him to receive the offering he made to the celestials in the yajñā, though normally the celestials would remain invisible and receive the offering through the fire, the flaming fire being the mouth of the devas: अग्रिमुखा वै देवा: He was so great and so full of goodwill to the entire world without a thought for himself that the food that he had would increase in proportion to the number of guests that arrived and there could never be a shortage nor ever arise an instance of his feeling embarrassed in his inability to feed a guest. His fame as a dharmishtha or the highest in righteousness so spread that Durvasa himself came to test him.

Strangely dressed and appearing almost deranged in mind, indulging in a variety of harsh expression, he arrived to feed at his place, was received most cordially by Mudgala, offered water to wash his feet, for the holy sip and for washing his palms by pouring into them. To him, ever so hungry, he offered food, with special attention shown him in his compassion for one appearing deranged in mind. The hungry one ate it all up in its entirety, and having rubbed his body with the remains, left as he had arrived. The next fortnight he repeated it. On that occasion also, Mudgala and his family went without food. Undaunted he again gleaned and gathered grain. Hunger did not worry Mudgala nor in the least ruffle his mind; there was neither anger nor a feeling of acrimony, contempt or agitation in the entire family by the noble example set by Mudgala.

Durvāsa repeated this six times, but could not see the least trace f change in the demeanour of Mudgala whose character was pure and mind immaculate. The extremely pleased Durvasa remarked to Mudgala that in the world there was not another like him who would give away without the least selfish thought about himself. Hunger is such that it kills righteousness, takes away steadfastness of mind and bravery. The tongue ever running after taste appropriates taste ever to itself. The life breath itself exists on food and the mind which is ever so fickle cannot be bridled. It is determined penance that can make steadfast both the mind and the sensory organs. Whatever is earned by wearisome exertion is difficult to be given away in its entirety in the most righteous manner. I am extremely pleased, most obliged and happy in having met you. In you is completely established victory over the senses, steadfastness, proper discrimination, self-control, patience, compassion, truth, and righteousness, in short, everything. There is no one your equal in immaculate character. You have won the highest celestial worlds and reached the zenith of glory. Oh how wonderful that your gift has been proclaimed as the highest even by the denizens of heaven! With this very body of yours you would go to heaven for your good deeds. As sage Durvasa spoke thus, the messenger of the gods arrived to meet Mudgala with the aerial car that could go at will, voked to swans, and warbling cranes, tinkling with rows of bells decorating it, looking so wondrous and wafting great perfume. He respectfully addressed the sage. Here is the celestial car that you have won by your great deeds. Please mount, Oh great sage! you have come to the height of your glory.

Mudgala in turn questioned the messenger of the gods. I would like to know the merits of those dwelling in heaven. What are their merits? What is their penance and what are their ideals? What is happiness in heaven and what are the demerits? Seven steps walked together makes one a friend. It is as a friend that I am putting you this question. Please explain to me truthfully all this. The messenger promptly replied. You are indeed wonderfully great in spirit, as you are still pondering over the merit or otherwise of the happiness of heaven that has come abegging to you to invite you to dwell therein. Heaven is yonder there, the great good path, eternally the way of the celestials, not available for any lacking in penance or in the performance

of the sacrifices (vajña). It is impossible for those who utter falsehood or deny the existence of God. The righteous ones, with self-control and patience, free from envy, imbued with self-abrogation, valiant on the battlefield, go to these meritorious worlds. The celestials, the Sādhyas, all the sages, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, all these are there, each in an assigned place. All the worlds are so bright and auspicious, full of lustre and yielding all desires. The golden Meru, the lord of mountains, is thousands of yojanas hence with its lovely celestial gardens like Nandana and others, happy pleasances to roam about and available only for those of merit. Here there is neither hunger, thirst nor fatigue, heat or cold, fear in any form, repugnance, or inauspiciousness. The fragrance here is always pleasant, the touch so delicate, the sounds so sweet and melodious. There is neither sorrow nor old age nor lamentation. This is the world won by great good deeds. Lustrous is the body for those here. Birth here is not through parents but by deeds of merit. Sweat, stink and fouling of any sort are here unknown. The clothes are ever bright, free from dust and the garlands never fade and are ever of pleasant perfume. The travel is always by the aerial car. Here there is no jealousy, grief, ignorance, hatred, These are the merits of heaven. Further up above these are yet other superior worlds. They are the holy ones for those that have realised the Brahman and rendered holy by their deeds. These are super-celestials called Ribhus whom the celestials themselves adore. Light emanates from these lokas that are self-illumined and yield all desires. There is here neither glamour for nymphs nor wealth or prosperity. They live on neither the offerings made in the fire nor on ambrosia. Even though amidst pleasures, the super-celestials have no desire for pleasures. They continue through the cycles of aeons. How can there be death ever for them? Joy, satisfaction, happiness, misery, likes and dislikes are equally absent. Even the gods long for such a life. This is accomplishment that is next to impossible. These thirtythree gods in their own worlds are reached by the wisest seers by great penance, sacrifice and gifts. All these you will enjoy by your good deeds which shine bright. This is the happiness in heaven diverse in form. These are the merits and now I recount the defects. Here one enjoys the fruit of good action. There is no fresh action possible here except eating up completely the entire stock of merit without adding a whit to it. This is a serious setback as at the end of

the enjoyment of the fruit, there is a downward fall, with the consequent misery in recalling earlier pleasures and the jealousy born of observing varying proportion of prosperity enjoyed by even the celestials themselves placed in lower gradations of position. When memory fails, dust gathers, garlands fade, it is understood that the time for the fall has come. These are disadvantages in all the worlds starting from Brahmaloka itself. This is, however, a good point even in the fall, as on earth, one could again gather merit by performing good deeds and again rise to enjoy in heaven. If one does not realise this and indulges in wicked deeds he goes into darkness and hell. Whatever is done here is enjoyed there hereafter. This is the land for deeds good or bad, and the world of enjoyment is heaven.

Mudgala again asked the Devadūta to narrate to him about the world completely free from shortcomings. The messenger of the gods then explained to him that the highest world of Vishņu beyond that of Brahmā was immaculate, eternal, lustrous and the one absolute. There none with desires go, nor those with vanity, greed, anger, passion, ignorance, spirit of vengeance, wickedness. Only those completely void of the sense of I and mine, totally free from ego, monopsychic and non-dualistic in outlook, with perfect self-control and peerless in meditation could go there. Oh! Mudgala! I have narrated to you all that you have asked because of my sympathy for you. Let us now go to heaven.

Mudgala now thought over what he had listened and, after careful discrimination, bowed to the messenger of the gods, and addressed him, Oh my dear! please go back and may you have a happy journey. I have no need for the pleasures of heaven so heavily marked by blemishes. After a fall from there, the grief is greater and the misery all the more unbearable; hence I have no desire to go to heaven. Where there is neither sorrow nor joy nor even the least movement, that is the place of the Eternal One where I would go. Having so said the sage Mudgala continued his practice of gleaning grain, and as a sage of righteousness pursued the highest control of senses regardless of mockery or praise, treating equally a pebble, piece of stone or gold, and by his great meditation and immaculate knowledge, he became ever absorbed in it, and thereby

having obtained superpower and superknowledge, went into the final bliss which is the highest nirvāṇa, attainment of eternity:

शिलोञ्छवृत्तिर्धर्मात्मा मुद्रलः संयतेन्द्रियः। क्रक्षेत्रे सत्यवागनसूयकः ॥ आसीद्राजन् अतिथिवृती क्रियावांश्च कापोतीं वृत्तिमास्थितः ।... सपुत्रदारो हि मुनिः पक्षाहारो वभूव ह। कपोतवत्या पक्षेण बीहिद्रोणमुपार्जयत् ॥ दशं च पौर्णमासं च कूर्वन् विगतमत्सरः। देवतातिथिशेषेण कुरुते देहयापनम् ॥ तस्येन्द्रः सहितो देवैः साक्षात्रिभुवनेश्वरः। प्रत्यगृह्णन् महाराज भागं पर्वणि पर्वणि ।।..... अतिथिभ्यो ददावन्नं प्रहृष्टेनान्तरात्मना। व्रीहिद्रोणस्य तद्यस्य ददतोऽन्नं महात्मनः ॥ शिष्टं मात्सर्यहीनस्य वर्धतेऽतिथिदर्शनात् । तच्छतान्यपि भुञ्जन्ति ब्राह्मणानां मनीषिणाम् । वृद्धिमृच्छति ॥ म्नेस्त्यागविश्रध्या त तदन्नं तं त् श्रश्राव धर्मिष्ठं मुद्रलं शंसितव्रतम्। दुर्वासा नप दिग्वासास्तमथाभ्याजगाम ह।। बिभ्रच्चानियतं वेषमुन्मत्त इव पाण्डव। विकचः परुषा वाचो व्याहरन्विवधा मुनिः ॥ अभिगम्याथ तं विप्रमुवाच मुनिसत्तमः। अन्नार्थिनमनुप्राप्तं विद्धि मां द्विजसत्तम ॥ स्वागतं तेऽस्त्वित मुनिं मुद्रलः प्रत्यभाषत । पाद्यमाचमनीयं च प्रतिपाद्यार्थ्यमुत्तमम् ॥ प्रादात्स तापसायान्नं क्षितायातिथिवृती । उन्मत्ताय परां श्रद्धामास्थाय स धृतव्रतः ॥ ततस्तदन्नं रसवत्स एव क्षयान्वितः। वुमुजे कृत्स्रमुन्मत्तः प्रादात्तस्मै च मुद्रलः ॥ भूकत्वा चान्नं ततः सर्वमुच्छिष्टेनात्मनस्ततः । अथाङ्गं लिलिपेऽन्नेन यथागतमगाच्च सः ॥ एवं द्वितीये संप्राप्ते यथाकाले मनीपिणः। आगम्य बुभुजे सर्वमन्नमुञ्छोपजीविनः ॥ निराहारस्तु स मुनिरुञ्छमार्जयते पुनः। न चैनं विकियां नेतुमशकनमूद्रलं क्ष्या।। न कोधो न च मात्सर्यं नावमानो न संभ्रमः। सपुत्रदारमुञ्छन्तमाविवेश द्विजोत्तमम् ॥

तथा तमुञ्छधर्माणं द्वींसा मुनिसत्तमम्। उपतस्ये यथाकालं पटकृत्वः कृतनिश्चयः॥ न चास्य मनसा किचिद्विकारं ददशे मुनिः। शद्धसत्वस्य शद्धं स ददशे निर्मलं मनः ॥ तम्बाच ततः प्रीतः स मुनिर्मृदलं ततः। त्वत्समो नास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन दाता मात्सर्यवर्जितः ॥ क्षद्वमंसंज्ञां प्ररादत्यादत्ते धैर्यमेव च। रसानुसारिणी जिल्ला कर्षत्येव रसान्प्रति ॥ आहारप्रभवा प्राणा मनो दुनिग्रहं चलम् । मनसङ्चेन्द्रियाणां चाप्यैकाग्रचं निश्चितं तपः ॥ श्रमेणोपाजितं त्यक्तं दुःखं शुद्धेन चेतसा । तत्सर्व भवता साधो यथावद्पपादितम् ॥ प्रीताः म्मोऽनुगहीताश्च समेत्य भवता सह। इन्द्रियाभिजयो धैर्यं संविभागो दमः शमः॥ दया सत्यं च धर्मश्च त्विय सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम । जितास्ते कर्मभिलोंकाः प्राप्तोऽसि परमां गतिम् ॥ अहो दानं विघुष्टं ते सुमहत् स्वर्गवासिभिः। सशरीरो भवान गन्ता स्वगं सूचरितवृत ॥ इत्येवं वदतस्तस्य तदा दूर्वाससो मृते:। देवदूतो विमानेन मुद्रलं प्रत्युपस्थितः।। हंससारसयुक्तेन किंकिणीजालमालिना। कामगेन विचित्रेण दिव्यगन्धवता तथा।। उवाच चैनं विप्राप विमानं कर्मभिजितम । समुपारोह संसिद्धं प्राप्तोसि परमां मृने ॥ तमेवं बादिनमृषिदेवदूतम्वाच ह। इच्छमि भवता प्रोक्तं गुणं स्वर्गनिवासिनाम् ॥ के गुणास्तत्र वसतां कि तपः कश्च निश्चयः। स्वर्गे तत्र सुखं कि च दोपो वा देवदूतक।। सतां साप्तपदं मैत्रमाहः सन्तः कुलोचिताः। मित्रतां च पुरस्कृत्य पृच्छामि त्वामंह विभो।। यदत्र तथ्यं पथ्यं च तद्व्रवीह्यविचारयन्। श्रत्वा तथा करिष्यामि व्यवसायं गिरा तव।।

Mahābhārata 3,260,3-36.

महर्षे आर्यवृद्धिस्त्वं यः स्वर्गसुखमुत्तमम् । संप्राप्तं वहु मन्तव्यं विमृशस्यवृथो यथा ॥ उपरिष्टादसौ लोको योऽयं स्वरिति संज्ञितः ।..... नातप्ततपसः पुंसो नामहायज्ञयाजिनः। नानृता नास्तिकाश्चैव तत्र गच्छन्ति मुद्रल ॥ धर्मात्मानो जितात्मानः शान्ता दान्ता विमत्सराः । दानधर्मरता मत्यीः शूराश्चाहवलक्षणाः ॥ तत्र गच्छन्ति धर्माग्रंच कृत्वा शमदमात्मकम्। देवाः साघ्यास्तथा विश्वे तथैव च महर्षयः ।।..... एषां देवनिकायानां पृथक् पृयगनेकशः। भास्वन्तः कामसंपन्ना लोकास्तेजोमयाः श्रभाः ॥..... मेरुः पर्वतराड् यत्र देवोद्यानानि मुद्रल ।..... न क्ष्तिपासे न ग्लानिर्न शीतोष्णे भयं तथा ।..... मनोज्ञः सर्वतो गन्धः सुखस्पर्शरच सर्वशः॥ शब्दः श्रुतिमनोग्राह्यः सर्वतस्तत्र वै मुने। न शोको न जरा तत्र नायासपरिदेवने ॥..... स्कृतैस्तत्र पुरुषाः संभवन्त्यात्मकर्मभि:। तैजसानि शरीराणि भवन्त्यत्रोपपद्यताम् ॥..... न म्लायन्ति स्रजस्तेषां दिव्यगन्धमनोरमाः ।..... तेषां तथाविधानां तु लोकानां मुनिपुंगव। उपर्यं वरि लोकस्य लोका दिव्यगुणान्विताः ।।..... यत्र यान्त्य षयो ब्रह्मन् पूताः स्वैः कर्मभिः शुभैः । ऋभवो नाम तत्रान्ये देवानामपि देवता: ।।..... न तेषां स्त्रीकृतस्तापो न लोकैश्वर्यमत्सरः। न वर्तयन्त्याहुतिभिस्ते नाप्यमृतभोजनाः ।।..... न सूखे सुखकामास्ते देवदेवाः सनातनाः।..... जरा मृत्युः कृतस्तेषां हर्षः प्रीतिः सुखं न च। न दु:खं न सूखं चापि रागद्वेषी कृतो मूने ।। देवानामपि मौद्रल्य कांक्षिता सा गतिः परा। दुष्प्रापा परमा सिद्धिरगभ्या कामगोचरैः ॥..... तं भुंक्ष्व सुकृतैर्लब्धं तपसा द्योतितप्रभः।..... कृतस्य कर्मणस्तत्र भुज्यते यत्फलं दिवि । न चान्यत्क्रियते कर्म मूलच्छेदेन भुज्यते ।। सोऽत्र दोषो मम मतस्तस्यान्ते पतनं च यत् ।..... असंतोषः परीतापो दष्ट्वा दीप्ततराः श्रियः । यद्भवत्यवरे स्थाने स्थितानां तत्सुदुष्करम्।। संज्ञामोहश्च पततां रजसा च प्रधर्पणम्। प्रम्लानेषु च माल्येषु ततः पिपतिषोर्भयम् ॥..... अयं त्वन्यो गुणः श्रेष्ठश्चच्तानां स्वर्गतो मुने । श्भानुशययोगेन मनुष्येषुपजायते ॥

तत्रापि स महाभागः सूखभागभिधीयते। न चेत्संब्घ्यते तत्र गच्छत्यधमतां ततः॥ इह यत्क्रियते कर्म तत्परत्रोपभुज्यते। कर्मभूमिरियं ब्रह्मन् फलभूमिरसौ मता।। महन्तस्त अमी दोषास्त्वया स्वर्गस्य कीर्तिताः। निर्दोप एव यस्त्वन्यो लोकं तं प्रवदस्व मे ॥ ब्रह्मण: सदनादुर्ध्व तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् । चृद्धं सनातनं ज्योतिः परं ब्रह्मेति यद्विदः ॥ न तत्र विप्र गच्छन्ति पुरुषा विषयात्मकाः। दम्भलोभमहाकोधमोहद्रोहैरभिद्र्ताः।। निर्ममा निरहंकारा निर्हन्द्वाः संयतेन्द्रियाः । ध्यानयोगपराइचेव तत्र गच्छन्ति मानवाः ।।..... एतच्छ त्वा तू मौद्रल्यो वाक्यं विमिमृशे धिया । विमृश्य च मृनिश्रेष्ठो देवदूतमुवाच ह।। देवदूत नमस्तेस्त् गच्छ तात यथासुखम्। महादोषेण मे कार्य न स्वर्गेण सुखेन वा ॥ पतनान्ते महददःखं परितापः सुदारुणः। स्वर्गभाजश्चरन्तीह तस्मात्स्वर्गन कामये।। यत्र गत्वा न शोचन्ति न व्यथन्ति चलन्ति वा । तदहं स्थानमत्यन्तं मार्गयिष्यामि केवलम् ॥ इत्युत्वा स मूनिर्वावयं देवदूतं विस्जय तम्। शिलोञ्छवत्तिर्धर्मात्मा शाममातिष्ठदूत्तमम् ॥ तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिभू त्वा समलोष्ठाश्मकांचनः। ज्ञानयोगेन श्रृद्धेन ध्यानिनत्यो वभूव ह।। ध्यानयोगाइलं लब्ध्वा प्राप्य बुद्धिमनुत्तमाम् । जगाम शाश्वंती सिद्धं परां निर्वाणलक्षणाम् ॥

Mahābhārata 3,261, 1-47

In the context of Mudgala's decision to leave alone heaven as unworthy of his choice and thinking of only kaivalya as the highest, it is interesting to recall exactly similar and probably even more telling evaluation of Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita, not just rejecting heaven but actually making fun of the craze for such a mockery as the pleasures of heaven. The lovely youthful damsels here on earth wink their eyes and there yonder they do not. This is all the difference between heaven and earth. What is there in heaven and why exclaim 'heaven! heaven!'. If one remembers just a little the result of the anger of Agastya or the curse of the sage Gautama that taught logic, no one

ToN. Glaganathan,

would wish even for his worst enemy the high state of Indra. Even if the celestial city Amarāvatī were reached or even the great city of four-faced Brahmā itself, what is it that has been really achieved, if it is only to come back again to this earth? Many a wife has been enjoyed, many a son and many a grandson, an ideal length of a hundred years of life has been experienced; yet, in truth, is there the mind for any one to give up life:

निमिषन्त्यत्र तरुण्यस्तत्र तरुण्यो न निमिषन्ति । ईदृक्षो हि विशेषः स्वगंः स्वगं इति किं तत्र ।। कोपो मैत्रावरुगोः शापो वा तार्किकस्य मुनेः । संस्मर्यते यदि सकुच्छत्रोरिप मास्तु शकपदम् ॥ गच्छात्वमरावत्यां गच्छतु चतुराननस्य वा नगरे । पुनरागन्तव्यं यदि पुंसा किं साधितं भवति ॥ भुक्ता बहवो दारा लब्धाः पुत्राश्च पौत्राश्च । नीतं शतमप्यायुः सत्यं वद मर्तुमस्ति मनः ॥

Vairāgyaśataka 60-63

The body is there for the fool to enjoy. For the discriminating ones it is for meditation. For those who are ignorant and vain, it is neither for enjoyment nor for meditation:

भोगाय पामराणां योगाय विवेकिनां शरीरमिदम्। भोगाय च योगाय चन कल्पते दुर्विदग्धानाम्।।

Vairāgyasataka, 67

Kālidāsa describes the glory of Siva as the acme of perfection of asceticism, though his body is completely interspersed with that of his beloved one (Fig. 35):

कान्तासंमिश्रदेहोऽप्यविषयमनसां यः परस्ताद्यतीनाम ।

Mālavikāgnimitra 1, 1.

Asceticism is supremely illustrated at its best when the mind is unruffled even in the presence of disturbing factors:

विकारहेती सति विकियन्ते येषां न चेतांसि त एव धीराः।

Kumārasambhava 1,59.

ध्यानं रत्निशालासु विबुधस्त्रीसंनिधौ संयमः।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,12

Some of the rishis are the highest examples of this control of senses.

In the Rāmāyana is given the story of sage Gautama, with Ahalyoddhara by Rama as the finale (Fig. 36), who, given charge in his hermitage of the most precious custody of a specially created paragon of beauty, Ahalyā, would not so much as even glance at her, least of all be emotionally stirred by her beauty. In divine appreciation of his steadfastness of mind which could not be moved by even such celestial beauty, Ahalyā was given to be Gautama's wife by Prajapati himself who later narrates it to Indra. I thus created one damsel specially exceeding in excellence all others. Whatever was the best in each limb of humanity was chosen to create this Ahalya to completely excel others in her charm. Hala connotes a defect and Halva is what is born of defect. As there was not a trace of defect in her, she became famous as the unblemished Ahalya and so I named her. But after I created her, I wondered whose spouse she was to be. In your mind, because of your exalted position, you imagined that she would be yours. I had kept her as a precious object in the care of sage Gautama. For years she was there as a deposit carefully protected. Having observed the steadfastness of mind of the great sage as the fruit of his great asceticism, I gave her to be his wife and that sage of great ethical spirit (dharma), sported with her as his wife:

सोहं तासां विशेषार्थं स्त्रियमेकां विनिर्ममे ।

यद्यत्प्रजानां प्रत्यङ्गं विशिष्टं तत्तदुढ़ृतम् ॥

ततो मया रूपगुणैरहल्या स्त्री विनिर्मिता ।

हलं नामेह वैरूप्यं हल्यं तत्प्रभवं भवेत् ॥

यस्मान्न विद्यते हल्यं तेनाहल्येति विश्रुता ।

ग्रहल्येति मया शक तस्या नाम प्रविततम् ॥

निर्मितायां च देवेन्द्र तस्यां नार्यां सुर्पभ ।

भविष्यतीति कस्यैषा मम चिता ततोऽभवत् ॥

त्य तु शक तदा नांरी जानीषे मनसा प्रभो ।

स्थानाधिकतया पत्नी ममैपेति पुरंदर ॥

सा मया न्यासभूता तु गौतमस्य महात्मनः ।

न्यस्ता बहूनि वर्षाणि तेन निर्यातिता च ह ॥

ततस्तस्य परिज्ञाय मया स्थैयं महात्मनः ।

जात्वा तपिस सिद्धि च पत्न्यर्थं स्पिशता तदा ॥

स तया सह धर्मात्मा रमते स्म महामुनिः ।

Another instance is Vasishtha himself whose very name suggests the highest self control. His high birth from Brahma himself, that entitled him to the highest reverence, was specially perfumed, as it were, by the great glory of self control. This son of Brahmā, consort of Adundhatī, conquered for ever, by his penance, passion and anger (kāma and krodha), unvanguishable even by the celestials, which in turn, personified, ever shampooed his feet, as he had complete control over his sensory organs. He was thus appropriately called Vasishtha. The example of his self control is seen in this, that in spite of all the offence towards him by Viśvāmitra, being of the noblest spirit, he controlled his anger, and even though he was deprived by him of his children, and he was ever so powerful, acted as if he were powerless, by completely ignoring and excusing him, and never tried to destroy Viśvāmitra. Though capable of bringing back to life his dead progeny by calling them back from the home of Yama, he would not transgress the natural laws of death like the ocean its boundary line of shore skirt. Hence it is that having obtained him as a preceptor of great self control, all the noble Ikshvāku kings could become emperors on earth:

त्रह्मणो मानसः पुत्रो विशिष्ठोऽरुन्धतीपितः ।
तपसा निर्जितौ शश्चदलेयावमरैरिप ॥
कामकोधावुभौ यस्य चरणौ संववाहतुः ।
इन्द्रियाणां वशकरो विशिष्ठ इति चोच्यते ॥
यस्तु नोच्छेदनं चक्रे कुशिकानामुदारधीः ।
विश्वामित्रापराधेन धारयन्मन्युमुत्तमम् ॥
पुत्रव्यसनसंतप्तः शिक्तमानप्यशक्तवत् ।
विश्वामित्रविनाशाय न चक्रे कर्म दारुणम् ॥
मृतांश्च पुनराहतुँ शक्तः पुत्रान् यमक्षयात् ।
कृतान्तं नातिचकाम वेलामिव महोदिधः ॥
यं प्राप्य विजितात्मानं महात्मानं नराधिपाः ।
इक्ष्वाकवो महीपाला लेभिरे पृथिवीमिमाम् ॥
पुरोहितमिमं प्राप्य वाशिष्ठं ऋषिसत्तमम् ।

Mahābhārata 1, 173, 5-11.

It is very interesting indeed that in spite of this asceticism Vasishtha is the only one among the seven *rishis* who is always accompanied by Arundhatī his spouse. When Siva thought of the saptarishis to be sent by him to ask for the hand of Pārvatī in wedlock of Himavān the lord of the mountains, the seven *rishis* accompanied

by Arundhatī presented themselves before him to go on that task.

ऋषीन् ज्योतिर्मयान सप्त सस्मार स्मरशासनः । ते प्रभामण्डलैर्व्योम द्योतयन्तस्तपोनधाः ॥ सारुन्धतीकाः सपदि प्रादुरासन् पुरः प्रभोः । तेषां मध्यगता साध्वी पत्युः पादापितेक्षणा ॥ साक्षादिव तपःसिद्धिर्वभासे बह्वरुन्धती ।

Kumārasambhava 6,3,4,11.

Kālidāsa specially mentions how after the evening prayer Vasishṭha is seated with his wife Arundhatī in his hermitage to give audience to Dilīpa and his queen looking almost like the flaming god of fire Agni with his consort Svāhā:

विघेः सायन्तनस्यान्ते स ददर्श तपोनिधिम् । अन्वासितमरुन्धत्या स्वाहयेव हविर्भुजम् ॥

Raghuvamśa 1, 56.

Vasishtha's attitude towards life itself, a detached outlook and complete spirit of renunciation, is seen in the way he gives his message to the lamenting Aja. Engaged in special sacrificial duties, he could not neglect them to go out for this purpose, and sends a disciple of his with a message. In this there are three verses that are more significant than the rest clearly giving the mind of Vasishtha so completely detached. Whether you weep for her or try to follow her in death, how can you get her back again? Surely, in consonance with their own acts on earth the pathways are always different for all who attain the other world. The fool imagines that a dart has been plunged into his heart by the death of his beloved one, but the discriminating one with steady perception, understands that it is a dart pulled out to open up the gateway for the highest bliss. When the union or separation of the soul and the body are so well known, how can the wise one lament over separation from a purely external object?

रदता कृत एव सा पुनर्भवता नानुमृतापि लभ्यते । परलोकजुषां स्वकर्मभिगंतयो भिन्नपथा हि देहिनाम् ॥..... अवगच्छिति मुढचेतनः प्रियनाशं हृदि शल्यमिपतम् । स्थिरधीस्तु तदेव मन्यते कुशलद्वारतया समुद्धृतम् ॥ स्वशरीरशरीरिणावपि श्रुतसंयोगिवपर्ययं यदा । विरहः किमिवानुतापयेद्वद बाह्यै विषयैविपश्चिताम् ॥

Raghuvamśa 8,85,88-89.

Another instance of complete renunciation and total detachment from those very precious objects, which the whole world would crave to have by sacrifices and motification, is Kasyapa who performs penance amidst those very surroundings that allure desire:

विवुधस्त्रीसंनिधौ संयमः।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,12.

Kaśyapa is still intimately associated with Aditi. When Mātali enquires of a disciple whether Kaśyapa could be approached, he is told by him that he is engaged with Aditi, the daughter of Daksha, seated in the company of the wives of other sages assembled and at her request discoursing to her on the ethics of a devoted wife:

दाक्षायण्या पतिव्रताधर्ममधिकृत्य पृष्टस्तस्यै महर्षिपत्नीसहितायै कथयतीति ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7.

The complete control of senses or brahmacharya in many of the rishis is so well known and established that Dushyanta is certain that Sakuntalā could not be the daughter of Kaṇva who is ever lost in meditation and could never think of a householder's life. That is why when Dushyanta asks the companions of Sakuntalā how when venerable Kāśyapa was very well known to be ever lost in meditation with his mind away from mundane things, this, their companion, could be his daughter. Anasūyā replies by explaining how Kuśika the great rājarishi is her parent. Abandoned as a child she was brought up by Kāśyapa Kaṇva who was thus her father.

राजा—भगवान् काश्यपः शाश्वते ब्रह्मणि स्थित इति प्रकाशः।
इयं च वः सखी तदात्मजेति कथमेतत् ?
अनसूया—शृणोत्वार्यः। अस्ति कौशिक इति कृतगोत्रनामधेयो
महाप्रभावो राजिषः। तमावयोः प्रियसख्याः प्रभवमवगच्छ।
उज्भितायाः शरीरसंवर्धनादिभिस्तातकाश्यपोऽस्याः पिता।
Abhijñānaśakuntalam 1.

Yet another great sage, who had no desire for any carnal pleasures but who, purely out of a sense of duty and compassion for his ancestors, hanging head downwards almost falling into a deep ravine by a snap in the thread of their progeny, was Jaratkāru who had all along remained unmarried, but promissed them his willingness to take a wife purely for having a worthy son to continue the line, but on specific conditions, her name to be the same as his, his exemption

from all household cares normally devolving on a householder, and the bride to be offered to him without his having to ask for a maiden in wedlock. These conditions were no sooner set than fulfilled. Vāsuki was only waiting to get Jaratkāru to marry his sister, the princess Jaratkārū, who was not only given in marriage, but he himself attended on him with utmost reverence, his sister being the pink of wifehood and devotion. The glorious offspring born of this was Āstīka (Fig. 37).

The story of Āstīka in the Mahābhārata narrating the way Jaratkāru lived with his wife and availed of the earliest opportunity to be back for his penance is indeed very interesting. He was resting with his head on the lap of his wife. The sun was about to set. Realising that it was the time for sandhyā, and it was the choice for her to rouse and anger him or allow him dereliction of the religious duty of sandhyā, she chose the former to the latter. So roused, his lips quivering in anger, he told her that the sun could not set as he slept which she could not understand and had thus insulted him. He had therefore to leave her and be back again for performance of penance. She pleaded and explained her peculiar position. So soothed he comforted her asking her not to grieve for his absence. He assured her that there was the promised child in her womb, lustrous like the fire, a great sage of the highest ethical spirit, learned in the Vedas and Vedāngas:

अस्त्ययं सुभगे गर्भस्तव वैश्वानरोपमः । ऋषि: परमधर्मात्मा वेदवेदाङ्गपारगः ॥ एवमुक्तवा स धर्मात्मा जरत्कारुमहानृषि: । उग्राय तपसे भयो जगाम कृतनिश्चयः ॥

Mahābhārata 1.47,42-43.

That is not the only instance. There are several such to show that rishis have the highest self control which makes them almost equal to the highest in asceticism, Siva himself. Agastya was no exception. In fact under similar circumstances, Agastya himself feeling for his ancestors whose fall was imminent by the snap of the thread of the progeny after Agastya, he promised them he would have a son that would continue the line. He requested the king of Vidar-

bha to give him his daughter Lopāmudrā in marriage. Lopāmudrā was so beautiful and so resplendant that none on earth could dare approach her father among the Kshatriya kings to ask him to give her in marriage. But when Agastya asked him, the king was upset, being not so willing to give away his beautiful daughter in marriage to almost a rustic, though of the highest lustre and potency, as he did not himself know how his daughter would react. He was consulting the queen, when the wise girl intervened and offered to marry him. Agastya in his usual spirit of renunciation required his wife also to be in bark garments as his true companion in the simplest mode of life. She left behind her royal jewellery and costume and accepted the rough bark garments to clothe her and both of them were lost in penance in Gangādvāra. She completely forgot all her earlier pleasures in her royal palace. It was indeed an ideal pair, Agastya and Lopāmudrā. She was the ideal wife.

So great was his self control that for several years Agastya could never think of her with any passion. But having promised his ancestors he had to fulfil their desire. Lopamudra felt that as overcoming passion and desire they were appropriately saintly in thought and appearance, now in a mood of pleasure, she desired the pleasures of the royal palace to be provided, which Agastya, unwilling to obtain in a trice by his power of penance, obtained through vast treasures by overcoming the two dreaded demons, Ilvala and Vātāpi. It is interesting how Agastya queried his wife whether she wanted a thousand sons or a hundred or a single one that could be far superior to a whole brood and the very pink of excellence. She chose the single covetable son and that is how the son Dridhasyu was born, learned in all the Angas, Upanishads, Vedas and ever uttering them, lustrous and ever intent on homa sacrifice, collecting so many sacrificial twigs and carrying them, that he was affectionately called Idhmavaha by Agastya:

> ज्वलित्रव प्रभावेन दृढस्युर्नाम भारत । साङ्गोपनिषदान् वेदान् जपित्रव महातपा: ।।..... स वाल एव तेजस्वी पितुस्तस्य निवेशने । इध्मानां भारमाजह्ने इध्मवाहस्ततोऽभवत् ।।

> > Mahābhārata 3.99,25-27.

It is this that Bāṇa specially mentions in his description of Agastya's hermitage in the vicinity of which the boy appeared moving about. The hermitage of Agastya was purified so to say by this noble progeny, his son Dṛidhadasyu, who moved from hermitage to hermitage to gather food begged as bhikshā in his vrata as brahmachārī, with a fresh large green leaf to gather the food offered as alms, holding a banyan staff, holy ashes smeared in triple streaks on his body and forehead, dressed in bark garment, a plaited band of muñja reeds wound around the waist.

तत्पुत्रेण च गृहीतव्रतेनाषाढिना पवित्रभस्मविरचितित्रपुण्ड्रकाभरणेन कुशचीवरवाससा मौञ्जमेखलाकलितमध्येन गृहीतहरितपर्णपुटेन प्रत्युटजमटता भिक्षां दृढदस्युनाम्ना पवित्रीकृतम् ।

Kādambarī 1, p. 42.

A telling instance of brahmacharya of the highest type, where the mind is not in the least affected even in the presence of peerless tempting beauty, is that of Ashṭāvakra who performed great penance. The sage Ashṭāvakra desirous of a householder's life, and having seen Suprabhā, the beautiful daughter of the sage Vadanya, whose form was fair and delicate like the moon or the jasmine flower, with face so charming and eyes so bright, with lustre so dazzling, begged of him to give her to him in wedlock:

अष्ठावको मुनि: पूर्वं विवाहार्थी सुलोचनाम् । अपश्यत्सुप्रभां नाम वदन्यस्य मुनेः सुताम् ॥ इन्दुकुन्दाङ्कु राकारसुकुमारतराकृतिम् । स तामालोक्य सुमुं खी ययाचे सोत्सुको मुनिम् ॥ तं वदन्योऽवदद्रच्छ विशालां दिशमुत्तराम् । अतिकम्य कुवेरस्य भवनं भवसेवितम् ॥ ततः प्रतिनिवृत्ताय तुभ्यं दास्यामि सुप्रभाम् ।

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1377-1380.

The reason for Vadanya setting an impossible task to Ashṭāva-kra may on the surface appear to be because of his very appearance but it has to be remembered that though the name Ashṭāvakra continued, he shed the deformity of his limbs just after he triumphed over Bandi at the court of Janaka even as a very young lad with his maternal uncle Śvetaketu son of Uddālaka and almost of his own age.

Bandi was the greatest intellectual of the age who, however, cruelly drowned defeated disputants. Ashtāvakra's father was also immersed in the river for having failed in his battle of wits with him. The little boy, however, easily put Bandi to discomfiture, who, however, as the son of Varuṇa, in appreciation of the boy, restored him his long-lost parent Kahoda. Directed by his father, Ashtāvakra, bathed in the miraculous stream Samangā near his hermitage in the presence of his mother, lost the deformities in his body that gave him his name and regained comely appearance:

ततोऽष्टावक्रमातुरथान्तिके पिता नदीं समङ्गां शीघ्रमिमां विशस्व । प्रोवाच चैनं स तथा विवेश समैरङ्गैश्चापि बभूव सद्यः ।। Mahābhārata 3,134,39.

He was asked by the sage Vadanya to proceed to the extreme north beyond the abode of Kubera and of Siva and on his return he promised him that he would have her as his wife. The real test of his unruffled mind steady and unprovoked by beauty far exceeding even that of Suprabhā would now be evident in his further peregrination and experience. This is essentially what Vadanya desired to satisfy himself about.

In this context the reason for his choosing to be a householder is that the *rishis* required *dharamprajā* or righteous-minded progeny to continue the family and to be free from their obligation to the manes. That is why Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita remarks that Gautama, though convinced that the householder's life was not a unmixed blessing, being a seer that could see far ahead in the right perspective and being the sage that propagated logic itsself, chose the householder's life to any other mode:

दृष्टदोषोऽिप गार्हस्थ्ये दीर्घदिशितया स्वयम् । गार्हस्थ्यमेव परमं मेने नैयायिको मुनि:।।

Sabhārañjanaśataka 99.

But having taken to heart the act of his spouse Ahalyā, Gautama, extremely distressed in his mind, arrived at the solution of complete annihilation of misery and sorrow by attaining bliss as he was a *muni* of the highest order who could concentrate in attaining it:

गृहिणीवृत्तदोषेण गौतमोऽत्यन्ततापितः । आतस्थे दु:खविध्वंसं कैवल्यं परमं मुनिः ॥

Sabhārañjanaśataka 94.

Ashtāvakra undertook the journey and having crossed the Himālaya and the wide rivir Bāhudā, went to the skirts of Kailāsa, saw the abode of the lord of wealth, Kubera, with its Eden-like garden full of Kalpa trees and golden lotuses in lakes. He was cordially received and entertained by Kubera for a year in his jewelled palaces, regaling him with dance and music by celestial nymphs. pleased, he took leave of Kubera and crossing the jewelled mountain track, he went to the forest of jewelled creepers with golden lotuses in cool lakes, in the midst of which was a magnificent palace decorated with gems and pearls. Here he sent word as a guest waiting to be received, when seven lotus-eyed celestial damsels of enthralling beauty decked in jewels offered him worship as a guest. Entering the mansion by the gem-decked steps shooting rays of lustre, he saw an old woman decked in jewels on a jewelled couch. Softly she spoke, offered him a seat, assuaged his fatigue, and set him wondering at all that he saw. In the evening he asked all the girls in attendance to retire retaining only one to attend to his needs. So directed all of them left except the old one attired in moon-white garment. Ashtavakra slept on a delicate bed with soft quilt and canopy. From the other bed slowly got up the old woman to approach the sage who was the very personification of self-control (brahmacharya). On the pretext of biting cold, with her body shivering, she got on to his bed and violently embraced him. In that state immediately he got up and stood unmoved like a log of wood, with his mind perturbed by this embrace from a woman who was a total stranger. Finding him averse to her touch, she spoke sweetly and plaintively, requesting him not to deny her desire for enjoyment. Here is this my jewelled mansion, here my garden of gem creepers. My mind itself is enslaved and delights in you. There is nothing wrong in your accepting me. Women are not to be brushed aside. For them there is no difficulty of fatigue. Women approach men with a snare of passion. They would not refrain either out of consideration of family traditions jealousy towards even cowives. The fishbannered Cupid expands his glory among women. What is this foolish talk of woman being a satī, devoted only to one man as her husband. Like streams that go lower and lower down in different levels, women approach different men egged on by Cupid. Women never discriminate. Even if it cost their life, women value highly the ambrosia of sexual pleasures. Requested ever so coaxingly, being the noble sage that he was, Ashtāvakra would not a whit encourage her. Next night she repeated her performance and spoke similarly. Please accept my coming to you on my own, unable to bear the heat of passion. Denial of passionate desire is sure death for women. Even this could create no impression on the sage. She again looked at him and spoke. This time she revealed herself. Know me to be the northern quarter that has shown you the guiles of women. You may now go to Vadanya and obtain his daughter. Having heard this Ashtavakra wondered, took leave of her and, slowly having learnt the guiles of women, went back to his own hermitage. He then approached Vadanya, acquainted him with all the guiles of women and duly received his daughter Suprabhā as his wife according to the sacred rite of wedding:

> इत्युक्त: स वदन्येन प्रतस्थे तां दिशं गनैः। ततो हिमाद्रिमुल्लङध्य बाहुदां च महानदीम् ॥..... स कैलासतटं प्राप्य ददर्श धनदालयम्। हेमपङ्काजनीतीरलसत्कल्पलतावनम् ॥ सादरं पूजितस्तेन राज्ञा वैश्रवणेन सः ।..... न्तौर्गीतैर्गन्धर्वयोषिताम् ॥ चिरमप्सरसां प्रीतिमासाद्य विपुलामामन्त्रय धनदं ययौ ॥ ततो गिरीन्द्रानुल्लङध्य प्राप रत्नलतावनम् । मणिमौक्तिकजालाङ्कं ददर्शोदारमन्दिरम् ॥..... ततः सप्त विनिर्गत्य कन्याः कमललोचनाः । दिव्यभषणसंपन्नास्तस्यातिश्यं प्रचाकिरे॥ गृहं प्रवेशितस्ताभिर्हेमरत्नासनोज्वलम् । ददर्श मणिपर्ये हु वृद्धां भास्वरभूषणाम् ॥ तया मधुरवादिन्या प्राप निर्दिष्टमासनम्। गतक्लम: क्षणं तस्थौ मूर्निविस्मयनिश्चलः ॥ दिनान्ते सोऽथ ताः प्राह यान्त् सर्वाः स्वमालयम । इत्युक्ते मुनिना सर्वाः प्रययुस्ताः सुलोचनाः ॥ एकैव जरती तत्र तस्थी गणिसितांश्का।। अब्टावकोऽथ सूष्वाप शयने स्पर्शशालिनि । वितानलम्ब मन्दारदाम्नि स्वच्छोत्तरच्छदे ॥

हितीयशयनाहद्वा समुत्थाय ततः शनै:। म्नेः शय्यान्तिकं प्रायान्तिभृता ब्रह्मचारिण: ॥ कम्पमानतनः साथ शय्यामारुह्य विक्लवा। मृनि शीतापदेशेन निबिडं परिषस्वजे ॥ आलिंग्यमानः स तया तस्थो काष्ठमिवाचलः । परदारापरिष्वङ्कशङ्कासक्तचिताशयः ॥ साथ तं स्पर्शविमुखं प्रणयान्मञ्ज्वादिनी। उवाच भोगसंकल्पभङ्गं मा मे कृथाः प्रभो ॥ इदं मे रत्नभवनं चारु रत्नलतावनम्। त्वदर्धानमकस्मान्मे चेतो हि रमते त्विय।। न ते दोषोऽस्ति मत्सङ्गे त्याज्या नैव त् योषितः। दुर्गमं नाभिजानन्ति गणयन्ति न च श्रमम् ॥ प्रयान्ति पूरुपानेव रागवागुरया स्त्रिय:। नैता: कुलानुरोधेन निवर्तन्ते न चेर्ष्यया ॥ रामास्वरुद्धप्रसरः सर्वथा मकरध्वज: । स्त्री सतीति प्रवादोऽयमेकासक्तेति का कथा।। नरान्तर प्रयान्त्येता निम्नान्निम्नमिवापगाः। मन्मथप्रेरिता नारी विषमं भजते कथम्।। यासां प्राणपणेनापि वल्लभं सुरतामृतम्। इत्यर्थ्यमानोऽपि तया नाभ्यनन्दत्स तां मूनि: ।। अन्येद्युरिप सा रात्री तथैव तमभाषत। भजस्व स्वयमायातां दुःसहो मे स्मरज्वरः ॥ निषेधो रतिवाञ्छासु निधनं किल योषिताम्। इत्युक्त्वा निर्विकारं तं सा दृष्ट्वा पुनरब्रवीत् ।। मामूत्तरां दिशं विद्धि स्त्रीवृत्तान्तं प्रदर्शितम् । अधुना तां वदन्यस्य गत्वा प्राप्नुहि कन्यकाम् ॥ एतदाकण्यं स मुनिस्तामामन्त्रच सविस्मय:। शनै: प्रतिययौ ज्ञातस्त्रीवृत्तो निजमाश्रमम् ॥ ततो वदन्यमभ्येत्य स्त्रीवृत्तान्तं निवेद्य तम् । अवापोद्वाहविधिना वितीणीं तेन सुप्रभाम् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1380-1408.

While these are some of the examples of *rishis* unaffected by any disturbing factor coming in the way of their penance, there are also cases where there have been occasional instances of succumbing. Continence with a complete control of the mind forced to celibacy is so difficult of achievement that Bhartrihari has rightly remarked that when outstanding sages like Viśvāmitra, Parāśara and others, who

subsisted only on air, water and leaves if at all as their sustenance, succumbed to the charm of the lotus-faced damsels on the very sight of such celestial beauty, surely if ordinary mortals who partake of sweetened rice soaked in ghee, milk and curd are expected to control their passion, it may equally be easily expected of the mountain Vindhya to float on the waves of the ocean:

विश्वामित्रपराशरप्रभृतयो वाताम्बुपर्णाशनास्तेऽपि स्त्रीमुखपङ्काजं सुललितं दृष्ट्रैव मोहं गता:। शाल्यन्नं सघृतं पयोदिषयुतं ये भुञ्जते मानवा-स्तेषिमिन्द्रियनिग्रहो यदि भवेद्विन्ध्य: प्लवेत्सागरे।।

Śringāraśataka 80.

The story of Parāśara's succumbing to the celestial beauty of the damsel Matsyagandhī (of piscine smell) that later became Gandhavatī (sweet-smelling) and also Yojanagandhī (fragrant from a distance) is narrated in the Adiparva. Originally called Satyavatī, she was miraculously got out of a fish, a celestial nymph Adrika so transformed by a curse, that had accidentally sucked the semen of the emperor Vasu and bore this beautiful girl, and was brought up in the abode of the chief of fishermen. As she plied the ferry on the river, Parāśara amazed at her divine charm and not the least repelled by her smell expressed his passion for her. Knowing his eminence as a sage and her own helplessness as the foster daughter of a fisherman, a virgin unsullied, and the scandal of watchful eyes of those on either bank. the sage by the power of his penance enshrouded the boat by a mist all around. She was amazed but feared her losing her virginity. The sage reassured her and so restored her after their coming together. He also granted her the boon of an ever-present pleasant odour that she could waft from quite a distance. The child born of their union was an immediate occurrence on a tiny island (dvipa) of the river Yamuna, whence called Dvaipāyana, he proved to be a miraculous child of the highest intellect who immediately took leave of his mother to repair for performing penance, promising her his appearance any moment she thought of him:

> संत्यज्य मत्स्यरुपं सा दिव्यं रूपमवाप्य च। सिद्धिषचारणपथं जगामाथ वराप्सराः।। सा कन्या दुहिता तस्या मत्स्या मत्स्यसगिन्धनी।..... शुशूषार्थं पितुर्नावं वाहयन्ती जले च तम्।।

परिकामन्यपञ्यदे तीर्थयात्रां अतीव रूपसंपन्नां सिद्धानामपि कांक्षिताम् ॥ दष्टैव स च तां घीमांश्चकमे चारुहासिनीम्। दिव्यां तां वासंवी कन्यां रम्भोरं मुनिपूङ्गवः ॥ संगमं मम कल्याणि क्रुष्वेत्यभ्यभाषत । साबवीत्तपश्य भगवन् पारावारे स्थितान्षीन् ॥ आवयोदं ष्टयोरेभिः कथं तु स्यात्समागमः। भगवान्त्रीहारमस्जत्प्रभुः ॥... तयोक्तो विस्मिता साभवत्कन्या ब्रीडिता च तपस्विनी । विद्धि मां भगवन कन्यां सदा पित्वशानुगाम् ॥ त्वत्संयोगाच्च दुष्येत कन्याभावो ममानध। एवमूक्तवतीं तां त् प्रीतिमान्षिसत्तमः ॥ उवाच मितप्रयं कृत्वा कन्यैव त्त्वं भविष्यसि ।. एवमूत्त्वा वरं वन्ने गात्रसौगन्ध्यमूत्तमम। स चास्यै भगवान्प्रादान्मनसः कांक्षितं भुवि ॥ ततो लब्धकरा प्रीता स्त्रीभावगुणभूषिता। संसर्गं ऋषिणाद्भ तकर्मणा।। जगाम सह तेन गन्ववतीत्त्येवं नामास्याः प्रथितं भवि। तस्यास्तु योजनाद्गन्धमाजिघ्रन्त नरा भुवि।। तस्या योजनगन्धेति ततो नामापरं समृतम् ।.. जज्ञे च यमुनाद्वीपे पाराशर्थः स वीर्यवान्।। मातरमनुज्ञाप्य तपस्येव मनो दघे॥ स्मतोऽहं दर्शयिष्यामि कृत्येष्विति च सोऽन्नवीत् । एवं द्वैपायनो जज्ञे सत्यवत्यां पराशरात ।। न्यस्तो द्वीपे स यद्वालस्तस्माद्वैपायनः स्मृतः ।

Mahābhārata 1,63,66,69-76,78,80-86.

While rishis like Trinabindu, unaffected by bewitching manifestation of the brandishments of celestial nymphs like Harin sent by ever-afraid Indra, cursed them to stop their efforts, their ire roused surging as waves of deluge destroying the barriers of their natural disposition of peace;

चरत: किल दुश्चरं तपस्तृणविन्दो: परिशिङ्कितः पुरा।
प्रजिषाय समाधिमेदिनीं हरिरस्मै हरिणीं सुराङ्गनाम्।।
स तपःप्रतिवन्धमन्युना प्रमुखाविष्कृतचारुविश्रमाम्।
अशपद्भव मानुषीति तां शमवेलाप्रलयोमिणा मुनिः।।

Raghuvamśa 8,79-80.

Rambhā, the celestial damsel of exceptional beauty, whom Viśvāmitra cursed to become petrified for a thousand years is another of the unfortunate temptresses:

सहस्राक्षस्य तत्कर्म विज्ञाय मुनिपुंगव:। रम्भां कोधसमाविष्टः शशाप कुशिकात्मजः।। यन्मां लोभयसे रम्भे कामकोधजयैषिणम्। दशवर्षसहस्राणि शैली स्थास्यसि दुर्भगे।।

Rāmāyana 1,64,11.12.

He himself earlier succumbed to the allurement of Menakā who was equally sent by Indra. But it is however clear that the nymphs themselves were not quite sure of their success in spite of their great beauty and charm. Rambhā herself remonstrates with Indra, her hands clasped beseechingly, explaining the sage as most irascible and her survival from his anger almost impossible. So very much afraid was she:

अयं सुरपते घोरो विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः। कोधमुत्सक्ष्यते घोरं मिय देव न संशय:॥

Rāmāyana 1,64,3

But in the case of Menakā which was earlier, Kauśika was himself allured by her unparalleled beauty like the lightning on the cloud, succumbed to cupid, and spoke to the nymph not only welcoming her to his hermitage but requesting her to favour him, so infatuated was he with her. When he realised his folly, however, as he had himself invited her, he spoke sweetly to her before he left, though even then she was quivering with fear. Viśvāmitra was indeed gracious. He only realised his folly and left for resuming and reinforcing his penance:

तां ददर्श महातेजा मेनकां कुशिकात्तमज: । रुपेणाप्रतिमां तत्र विद्युतं जलदे यथा ।। दृष्ट्वा कन्दर्पवशगो मुनिस्तामिदमब्रवीत् । अप्सर: स्वागतं तेऽस्तु वस चेह ममाश्रमे ।। अनुगृह्णीष्व भंद्र ते मदनेन सुमोहितम् । इत्युक्ता सा वरारोहा तत्र वासमथाकरोत् ।।

Rāmāyana 1,63,5-7.

Rāmāyana 1,63,13.

But the same Viśvāmitra once determined for self control, repents even for his cursing Rambhā, though he was not allured by her. He had still succumbed to his anger resulting in his pronouncing the curse. It was not only passion (kāma) but also anger (krodha) that was to be overcome, and controlling both, and becoming taciturn, uttering not a single word, he performed such severe penance for thousands of years, fasting all the while that, when finally about to break his fast, when Indra himself came in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa, gladly gave away to him, even the food that he sighted after ever so long, determined to continue his penance. So severe was his asceticism that there spurted a flaming smoky streak from his head which frightened the entire universe. Brahmā himself had to proclaim him Brahmarishi and even Vasishtha himself:

अथ वर्षसहस्रं वै नोच्छ्वसन्मुनिपुङ्गव:।
तस्यानुच्छ्वसमानस्य मूर्घ्नि घूमो व्यजायत।।
त्रैलोक्यं येन संभ्रान्तमदीपितमिवाभवत्।।
ततो देवा: सगन्धर्वा: पन्नगोरगराक्षसा:।
मोहितास्तेजसा तस्य तपसा मन्दरश्मय:॥
तत: सुरगणा: सर्वे पितामहपुरोगमा:।
विश्वामित्रं महात्मानं वाक्यं मधुरमन्नुवन्॥
न्नह्मर्षे स्वागतं तेऽस्तु तपसा स्म सुतोषिता:।
न्नह्मण्यं तपसोग्रेण प्राप्तवानसि कौशिक॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,65,7-9, 18-19.

It is no wonder that the earlier exploits, which Viśvāmitra alone could achieve, are recalled, like sending Triśanku to another heaven created by him afresh, the magnanimous saving of Śunaśśepa from the sacrificial pole for Varuṇa, the calling a halt to the allurements of Rambhā and others:

न खलु विश्वामित्रादृषेर्महत्वेन कश्चिदपर: प्रकृष्यते । यस्य भगवतस्त्रैशङ्कवं शौनःशेपं रम्भास्तम्भनं चेत्यपरिभेयमाश्चर्यजातमास्यानविद ग्राचक्षते, ॥

Mahāvīracharita 1

and the sage respectfully described as an additional fourth sacred fire, or a fifth to the known number of *Vedas*, or a great holy place on the move, or the very embodiment of Dharma itself:

तुरीयो ह्योष मेघ्योऽग्रिराम्नायः पञ्चमोऽथ वा। अथवा जङ्गमं तीर्थं धर्मो वा मूर्तिमान् चर:॥

Mahāvīracharita 1,10.

The tradition of the Rāmayaṇa shows that Brahmā and the celestials not only pronounced him Brahmaṛishi but endowed him with the highest Brahmavidyā that automatically dawned on him

प्रतिभास्यन्ति ते वेदा ब्रह्म चाव्ययमुत्तामम् ।

Rāmāyana 1,65,

And Bhavabhūti glorifies this in the remark that the sage that became the abode of the lustre of penance, not only obtained the highest supreme enlightenment, but was also prayed by Brahmā himself and the celestial sages to refrain from any further severe penance that looked almost enveloping:

तदस्मिन्ब्रह्माद्यं स्त्रिदशमुनिभिर्नाथितशमे तपस्तेजोधाम्नि स्वयमुपगतब्रह्मणि गुरौ।

Mahāvīracharita 1,11.

Viśvāmitra was like another Vaśishtha, who could by the power of his penance know the great valour of Rāma and reassure Daśaratha (Fig. 38).

अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराकमम्। विशिष्ठोऽपि महातेजा येचेमे तपिस स्थिताः।।

Rāmāyaņa 1,19,14-15.

He could also, being so great a sage, assure Dasaratha that none except Rāma could takle Subāhu and Mārīcha (Fig. 39).

नच तौ राघवादन्यो हन्तुमुत्सहते पुमान् । वीर्योत्सिक्तौ हि तौ पापौ कालपाशवशं गतौ ॥

Rāmāyana 1,19,12.

And Śatānanda, son of Gautama and Ahalyā and the royal priest of Janaka, narrates to Rāma the glory of Viśvāmitra and all of them watch spell-bound Rāma breaking the bow (Fig. 40).

Another example of a *rishi* who was seduced, is not by the all-urement of the most charming celestial nymphs, but by shoals of fish in large troops of family moving along the waters of the river Yamunā in the deep bottom of which he was performing severe penance for twelve long years. This piscine family with its passionate attachment and the magnitude of its progeny so attracted the mind of Saubhari, a learned master of the *Rigveda*, that he resolved to enter the householder's life. Kālidāsa, in the context of the householder's life, remarks and not without an element of truth in it, that finding Siva, the peak of self-control and the foremost of the detached, being inclined towards wedlock, the great sages born of Prajāpati shed whatever little that they may have had of shamefacedness regarding their householders' life:

तिस्मन् संयमिनामाद्ये जाते परिणयोन्मुखे। जह्नु: परिग्रहब्रीडां प्राजापत्यास्तपस्विनः॥

Kumārasambhava 6,34

The attraction was so great and the desire to marry came up so prominent in his mind that, Saubhari, a sage of extraordinary powers of penance, came out of the Yamunā where he had done penance undistracted for twelve years to marry one of the daughters of the emperor Māndhātā of whom he asked one princess to be given to him in wedlock.

The emperor, judging the incompatibility of the aged sage and his young and resplendant daughters of celestial charm, yet afraid of the displeasure of the sage, asked him to marry any of his daughters that would agree, in the hope that his very looks would dissuade any of his daughters agreeing to such a request. But when he was conducted into the palace Saubhari appeared so handsome a young man to the princesses that all the fifty of them with one accord chose him as their husband, and the sage who had come for only one to be his companion in life as a householder, took all of them to wife to avoid disappointment to any of them. The king was astonished but he did not know the transformation of the rishi who to his eyes appeared in the same decrepitude.

In his natural affection and concern for his daughters whom he

had hoped to have a better fate in matrimony, he decided to pay them a visit to find out how they were reconciling to their fate. But where was the hermitage! There were as many palaces as there were princesses; and when he enquired apologetically of his eldest daughter, she gave him to know that she was perfectly happy with her young and beautiful husband in a heavenly mansion with smiling gardens and lakes though, however, as he never moved out of the palace, she was sorry for the rest of her sisters who were neglected. It was the same story with the second daughter and the third and all the rest. In fact, Saubhari by the power of his penance could transform himself not only into a youth but into as many forms as there were princesses. It should be remembered that Saubhari as a great sage was so powerful in asceticism, which sometimes transcends celestial powers, that he is the only other example besides Krishna in the rāsa sport, where he transformed himself into as many as there were gopikās. Here was this other, as many Saubharis as there were the daughters of Mandhata. The story in the Vishnupurana is a glory of the power of penance. Yet here, the fish were enough to distract the mind of such a great sage, not to talk of Rambha or Urvasī or the Lord in the guise of Mohini the temptress at whose feet grovelled even the greatest sages (Fig. 41).

बह्व चश्च सौभिर्ताम ऋषिरन्तर्जले द्वादशाव्दं कालमुवास । तत्र चान्तर्जले सम्मदनामाति-वहुप्रजोऽतिप्रमाणो मीनाधिपतिरासीत् । तस्य पौत्रदौहित्राः पार्श्वतः पुष्ठतो वक्षःपुच्छशिरसां चोपरि भ्रमन्तस्तेन सहार्हानशमितिन्वृ ता रेमिरे । स चापि तत्स्पर्शोपचीयमानहर्षप्रकर्षो बहुप्रकारं तस्यर्षः पश्यतस्तैरात्मजपौत्रदौहित्रादिभिः सहानुदिवसं बहुप्रकारं रेमे । अथान्तर्जलावस्थितः स सौभिर्र्त्काग्रतासमाधानमपहायानुदिनं तत्तस्य मत्स्यस्यात्मजपौत्रदौहित्रादिभिः सहातिरमणीयं लिलतम-वेक्ष्याचिन्तयत् । अहो धन्योयमीदृशमप्यनिभमतं योन्यन्तरमप्यवाप्यैभिरात्मजपौत्रादिभिः सह रममाणोऽ-तीवास्माकं स्पृहामुत्पादयित । वयमप्येवं पुत्रादिभिः सह रमयिष्यामः । इत्येवमिभसमीक्ष्य स तस्मादन्तर्जलान्निष्कम्य निर्वेष्टुकामः कन्यार्थं मान्धातारं राजानमगच्छत् । आगमनश्रवणसमनन्तरं चोत्थाय तेन राज्ञा सम्यगर्धादिना पूजितः कृतासनपरिग्रहः सौभिर्ष्वाच । निर्वेष्टुकामोस्मि नरेन्द्र कन्यां प्रयच्छ मे मा प्रणयं विभाक्षीः । न ह्यिंथनः कार्यवशाभ्युपेताः ककुत्स्थगोत्रे विमुखाः प्रयान्ति । अन्येपि सन्त्येव नृपाः पृधिव्यां क्ष्मापाल येषां तनयाः प्रसूताः । कि त्विंयनामिथतदानदीक्षाकृतवृतं इलाघ्य-मिदं कुलं ते ।

> शतार्धसंख्यास्तव सन्ति कन्या तासां ममैका नृपते प्रयच्छ । यत्प्रार्थनाभङ्गभयाद्विभेमि तस्मादहं राजवरातिदुःखात् ॥

इति ऋषिवचनमाकर्ण्यं स राजा जराजर्जरितदेहं तमृषिमालोक्य प्रत्याख्यानकातरस्तस्माच्च

भगवतः शापतो विभ्यत्किंचिदधोमुखश्चिरं दध्यौ "भगवन्नस्मत्कुलस्थितिरियं य एव कन्ययाभिरु-चितोऽभिजनवान् वरस्तस्मै कन्या प्रदीयते । भगवद्वाञ्छास्मन्मनोरथानामप्यगोचरवर्तिनी कथमप्येषा संजाता तदेवमवस्थितेन विद्यः किं कुर्म इति तन्मया चिन्त्यत इत्यभिहिते तेन भभूजा मूनिरचिन्तयत । अहो अयमन्योऽस्मत्प्रत्याख्यानोपाय:, वृद्धोयमनभिमतः स्त्रीणां किमूत कन्यानामित्यमूना संचिन्त्यैव-मिमिहितम । एवमस्त, तथा करिष्यामीति संचिन्त्य मान्धातारम्बाच । यद्येवं तदादिश्यतामस्माकं प्रवेशाय कन्यान्तः प्रवर्षवरः । यदि कन्यैव काचिन्मां नाभिलषति तदाहं दारसंग्रहं करिष्यामीत्यन्यथा चेत्रदलमस्माकमेतेनातीतकालारम्भेनेत्युक्त्वा विरराम । ततश्च मान्धात्रा मुनिशापशङ्कितेन कन्यान्तः प्रवर्षवरः समाज्ञप्तः । कन्यान्तःपूरं प्रविशन्नेव भगवानखिलसिद्धगन्धर्वमनुष्येभ्योतिशयेन कमनीयं रूपमकरोत्। प्रवेश्य च तमृषिमन्तःपूरे वर्षवरस्ताः कन्याः प्राह । भवतीनां जनयिता महाराजः समाज्ञापयति । स्वयमस्मान् ब्रह्मापः कन्यार्थी समभ्यागतो मया चास्य प्रतिज्ञातं यद्यस्मत्कन्यका काचिद्भवन्तं वरयति तत्कन्याया छन्देनाहं परिपन्थानं करिष्यामीत्याकर्ण्यं सर्वा एव ताः कन्याः सानुरागं समन्मथाः करेणव इवेभयूथपति तमृषिमहमहिमकया वरयांवभूवः ।.....कृतानुरूपविवाहश्च महिषः सकलास्ताः कन्यकाः स्वमाश्रममनयत् । तत्र चाशेषशिल्पप्रगोतारं विधातारमिवान्यं विश्वकर्माणमाहय सकलकन्यानामेकैकस्याः प्रोत्फुल्लपङ्कजकूजत्कलहंसकारण्डवादिविहंगमाभिरामजलाशयाः सोपननाः सावकाशाः साध्रशय्यासनपरिच्छदः प्रासादाः क्रियन्तामित्यादिदेश । तच्च तथैवान्ष्ठितमशेषशिल्प-विशेषाचार्यस्त्वष्टा दिशतवान् । तत्रश्च परमिषणा सौभरिणाज्ञप्तस्तेषु गृहेष्वनपायी नन्दनामा महानिधि-रासांचक । ततोऽनवरतभक्ष्यभोज्यलेह्याद्युपभोगैरागतानुगतभृत्यादीनहींनशमशेषगृहेषु ताः क्षितीश-दृहितरो भोजयामासुः । एकदा तु दुहितृस्र हाकृष्टहृदयः स महीपितरितदुः खितास्ताः सुखिता वा इति विचित्य तस्य महर्षेराश्रममुपेत्य स्फुरदंशुमालां स्फटिकमंयी प्रासादमालामितरम्योपवनजलाशयां ददर्श । प्रविश्य चैकं प्रासादमात्मजां परिष्वज्य कृतासनपरिग्रहः प्रवत्तस्रोहनयानाम्बूगर्भनयनोऽब्रवीत । अय्यत्र बत्से भवत्याः सुखमुत किंचिदसुखम् । अपि ते महर्षिः स्नेहवानृत संस्मर्यतेऽस्मद्र हवासस्येत्युक्ता तनयापि पितरमाह । तातातिशयरमणीयः प्रासादोऽत्रातिमनोज्ञम्पवनमतिकलवाक्यविहगाभिरुताः प्रोत्फल्ल-पद्माकरजलाशयाः । मनोनुकलभक्ष्यभोज्यानुलेपनवस्त्रभूषणादिभोगमृद्गि शयनानि सर्वसंपत्समवेत-मेतद्वाहंस्थ्यम् । तथापि केन वा जन्मभूमिनं स्मयंते । त्त्वत्प्रसादादिदमशेषशोभनम् । कि त्वेतन्ममैकं इ:सकारणं यदस्मद्भत्तिसम् हान्न निष्कामति । ममैव केवलमतिप्रीत्या समीपवर्ती नान्यासां मम भगिनीनाम् । एवं च मम सहोदयों दु:खिता इत्येवमतिदु:खकारणिमत्युक्तस्तया द्वितीयं प्रासादमुपेत्य स्वतनयां परिष्वज्योऽपविष्टस्तर्थव पृष्टवान् । तयापि तथैव सर्वमेतत्प्रासादाद्य पभोगस्खमाख्यातम् । ममैव केवलं पार्खं वर्ती नास्मद्भगिनीनामित्येवमादि श्रुत्वा समस्तप्रासादेषु राजा प्रविवेश तनयां तनयां तथैवापुच्छत्ताभिश्च तथैवाभिहितः परितोपविस्मयनीयनिर्भरविवशहदयो भगवन्तं सौभरि एकांतावस्थित-मुपेत्य कृतपूजोऽब्रवीत् । दृष्टस्ते भगवन् सुमहानेष सिद्धिप्रभावो नैवंविधमन्यस्य कस्यचिदस्माभिवि-भृतिविलसितम्पलक्षितम्।

Vishņupurāņa 4,2,20-41

After so long Saubhari realised what a fall it was for him that he should have been attracted into the snare of life of the family. The company of fishes had made him passionate like fish. A motif of merman as a sage is the sculptor's interpretation of the theme (Fig. 42). How sad this completely enveloping delusion of mind. How can

there be the end of disaster in millions of years or in billions, and as desires get satisfied new desires rise up. Till death snatches, desires continue. For one deluded by desires there is no concentration on the Almighty. For him who was contemplating entirely on God in the depth of the waters, this delusion had come by the company of This married life of his had come only because of this. The greatest impediments are born of passion. By association with the fish he had developed a passion for children and grand-children and thus deceived himself. The verse that he uttered reflecting on this is an oft-quoted famous one. For the ascetics the way to salvation is to avoid company. By getting into company, there are so many endless blemishes created. Even one who has gone high up in the scale of meditation falls very low down even when he is an ascetic with self control just because of avoidable company. How much more is the effect of this on one with undeveloped insight. He resolved to so act thereafter that with his blemishes washed off and with them the misery as well, he should become blissful shedding all sorrow, and to take refuge in Vishnu beyond Whom there is nothing higher, Who is the highest among the high, the greatest of the great:

अहो मोहस्यातिविस्तरः ।

मनोरथानां न समाप्तिरस्ति वर्षायुतेनापि तथाब्दलक्षैः ।

पूर्णेषु पूर्णेषु पुनर्नवानामुत्पत्तयः सन्ति मनोरथानाम् ।।.....

अमृत्युतो नैव मनोरथानामन्तोस्ति विज्ञातिमदं मयाद्य ।

मनोरथासिक्तपरस्य चित्तं न जायते वै परमात्मसिङ्गः ॥

स मे समाधिर्जलवासमात्रे मत्स्यस्य सङ्गात्सहसैव नष्टः ।

परिग्रहः सङ्गकृतो ममायं परिग्रहोत्थश्च महाविधित्साः ॥

निःसङ्गता मुक्तिपदं यतीनां सङ्गादशेषाः प्रभवन्ति दोषाः ।

आष्ट्रयोगोऽपि निपात्यतेषः सङ्गेन योगी किमुताल्पबुद्धः ॥.....

यथा हि भूयः परिहीनदोषो जनस्य दुःखैर्भविता न दुःखी ।.....

यस्मान्न कि चित्तमंह गुरूणां परं गुरुं संश्रयमेमि विष्णाुम् ।.....

Vishnupurāṇa 4,2,44,47,48,52,53,56.

As Rāma moves on in the forest towards the hermitage of Agastya, he is suddenly attracted by celestial music and enquires how it was issuing from a near by large lotus lake with fragrant blooming flowers, though no one was in sight to create that melody. Wondering Rāma and Lakshmaṇa enquire of one of the sages, Dharmabhrita,

whence this music arose. He learns from him that the lake itself is called Pañchāpsara and an eternally pleasant one created by the power of penance of the sage Māṇḍakarṇī. Here he had performed severe penance subsisting only on air for thousands of years from amidst the waters. The penance was so severe that Agni and all the other devas were bewildered and sent the topmost nymphs of the celestial sphere to distract him. These five nymphs Pañchāpsaras, agile in movement, golden-hued, slim and like the very lightning in lustre, so attracted the cupidity of the sage that they became his wives, and in this very lake, in the mansions underneath created by him, the sage lives the utmost pleasant life in eternal sport, listening to the heavenly music and dance of the nymphs and the tinkling of the waist zones and anklets (Fig. 43). That is Māṇḍakarṇī a sage who could also be attracted by physical charm and melody, even as Kālidāsa says:

रम्यणि वीक्ष्य सधुरांश्य निशम्य शब्दान् पर्युत्सुखी भवति यत्सुखितोऽपि जन्तुः।

Abhijāānaśākuntalam 5.2.

इदं पञ्चाप्सरो नाम तटाकं सर्वकालिकम । निर्मितं तपसा राम मुनिना माण्डकणिना ।। स हि तेपे तपस्तीवं माण्डकणिर्महामुनिः। दश वर्बसहस्राणि वायुभक्षो जलाश्रयः॥ ततः प्रव्यथिताः सर्वे देवाः साग्निप्रांगमाः। अब्रवन वचनं सर्वे परस्परसमागताः॥ अस्माकं कस्य चित्स्थानमेष प्रार्थयते मूनिः। इति संविग्नमनसः सर्वे ते त्रिदिवीकसः॥ तत्र कत तपोविष्नं देवै: सर्वेनियोजिता: । प्रधानाप्सरसः पञ्च विद्युच्चलितवर्चसः॥ अप्सरोभिस्ततस्ताभिम् निद् ष्टपरावरः । नीतो मदनवश्यत्वं सुराणां कार्यसिद्धये।। ताश्चैवाप्सरसः पञ्च मूनेः पत्नीत्वमागताः। तटाके निर्मितं तासामस्मिन्नन्तिहतं गृहम् ॥ तथैवाप्सरसो पञ्च निवसन्त्यो यथासूलम् । रमयन्ति तपोयोगान्मूनि यौवनमास्थितम ॥ तासां संक्रीडमानानामेष वादित्रनिःस्वनः । श्रूयते भूषणोन्मिश्रो गीतशब्दो मनोहरः ॥ आश्चर्यमिति तस्यैतद्वचनं भावितात्मनः ।

Rāmāyaņa 3,11,11-20.

There are various readings of the name Māṇḍakarṇī. It is spelt Sātakarṇī as well as Māṇḍakarṇī in addition to Maṇḍakarṇī. Rāma pointedly draws the attention of Sītā to this lake where sports the sage Sātakarṇī, and the peaceful penance grove of that great sage, as Rāma remarks in a very meaningful way, is like the disc of the moon only slightly visible from among the clouds, which is as much as to say that the lustrous sage Māṇḍakarṇī, with a heart so kind and cool like the moon, was clouded as it were and his lustre almost effaced by the cloudlike nymphs that surrounded and almost drowned him, enslaved him literally in that lake named after the Pañchāpsara:

एतन्मुनेर्मानिमि सातकर्णेः पञ्चाप्सरौ नाम विहारवरि । आभाति पर्यन्तवनं विदूरान्मेघान्तरालक्ष्यमिवेन्दुबिम्बम् ।। Raghuvamsa 13,38.

Rāma also explains what a great sage and what severe penance meant Sātakarnī. Long ago with only the tips of the blades of grass as his sustenance like the deer around him, he was engaged in penance, and Indra frightened by his deep meditation, contrived a tricky snare for him in the youth and beauty of the sight of the best of the celestial nymphs:

पुरा स दर्भाङ्क रमात्रवृत्तिश्चरन्मृगैः सार्धमृषिर्मधोना । समाधिभीतेन किलोपनीतः पञ्चाप्सरोयौवनकृटवन्धम् ॥

Raghuvamśa 13,39

To recall immediately the memory of Sītā of the heavenly music once heard, Rāma repeats, that the sound of the drum indicating the progress of music from the abode of the sage in the palace underneath the lake creates echoes for a moment in the windows of the balcony of their aerial car moving in the sky so high above reaching even this distance in all its clarity of sweet melody:

तस्यायमन्तर्हितसौधभाजः प्रसक्तसङ्गीतमृदङ्गधोषः । वियद्गतः पुष्पकचन्द्रशालाः क्षणं प्रतिश्रुनमुखराः करोति ॥

Raghuvamśa 13,40.

Rishvaśringa, the innocent hermit boy, son of Vibhandaka, is a classical instance of a sage who never knew what was a woman. father had brought him up so in his hermitage far away from where any woman could reach, with only the deer around him as his companions, the only human he knew being his father. He had no idea of any except a sage in penance that his father was. He could never know that there was a king, people in and around villages and towns in various professions, householders, women and children, and those young in age and advanced in years. All that he knew was there could be sages as he had anyway seen an example in his father. Vibhandaka was a tremendous sage of great potency whose only ideal was to bring up his son in the utmost brahmacharya. When there was a drought in Kalinga, it was told the king that if the immaculate hermit boy Rishyaśringa was brought to his realm, immediately on his setting foot on the soil there would be a downpour. But how to entice him was the question! A number of beautiful damsels clever in alluring were sent to the hermitage of the rishi Vibhandaka so far away when the great sage was away.

The young hermit boy who had never seen a boat, the vehicle used by them for their journey, nor tasted sweet balls such as they brought except the fruit he was accustomed to, nor costly silken dress and jewellery as bedecked them, took them to be a different type of hermits, wearing a different variety of bark garments, lacking the long beards and matted locks which differed in their appearance as decked and braided hair, and all the time believed they were sages, only of a different type, but nevertheless only sages. The innocent narration of one of the new types of sages that Rishyaśringa describes vividly to his father, when he questions him if any sage had arrived at his hermitage, is indeed a perfect example of pure innocence and complete faith in only sages as having existence in the world, yet with a peculiar wonder that there could be such lovely sages as well. He narrates thus.

Here came a brahmachārī with peculiar jaṭās, neither short nor tall, golden-hued, eyes wide like lotus petal, shining like a celestial, ever so aesthetically complete, lustrous like the sun, fair but with blue eyes of deep iridescence, his hair dark, long, perfumed and plaited

with golden threads. On his neck, there is something of striking wonder, shining like lightning in the sky. Just below his neck, there is a pair of globular limbs devoid of hair growth, the waist so narrow near the navel but the hip far larger than normal size, and from under his transparent garment, there is a waist zone like mine but only There is something more of a wonder about him that on his ankle there are objects that tinkle and on the hands are tied lovely objects somewhat like my rosary, like the swans singing in the waters in delight. There is sweet resounding as they move with the rustling of their garment looking so beautiful and not so simple and colourless as mine. His face is indeed inviting and so wonderful to see and his speech gladdens the heart like the cooing of the cuckoo, and my heart leaps up as I listen to him, like the gentle rustle of the breeze as in spring in the forest. There is an aroma and fragrance around him as he moves wafted ever so softly by the gentle wind. His locks are specially dressed up, divided into two by a line on the forehead, and the ears are decked with circular objects like Chakravāka birds looking ever so lovely. And what a lovely wondrous fruit he carries in his right hand, which, thrown on the ground over and over again bounces higher and higher up creating a wonder indeed:

> इहागतो जटिलो ब्रह्मचारी न वै ह्रस्वो नितदीर्घो मनस्वी। सुवर्णवर्णः कमलायताक्षः श्वेतः सुराणामिव शोभमानः॥ समृद्धरुप: सवितेव दीप्तः सुरुलक्ष्णकृष्णाक्षिरतीव गौरः। नीलाः प्रसन्नाश्य जटाः सुगन्धा हिरण्यरज्जुग्रथिताः सुदीर्घाः ।। आश्चर्यरूपा पुनरस्य कण्ठे विभ्राजते विद्यदिवान्तरिक्षे। द्रौ चास्य पिण्डावधरेण कण्ठादजातरोमौ सुमनोहरौ च ॥ विलग्मध्यश्च स नाभिदेशः कटिश्च तस्यातिक्रशप्रमाणः। तथास्य चीरान्तरतः प्रभाति हिरण्मयी मेखला मे यथेयम् ॥ अन्यच्च तस्याद्भ तदर्शनीयं विकृजितं पादयोः संप्रभाति । पाण्योश्च तद्वत्स्वनवन्निबद्धौ कलापकावक्षमाला यथेयम्।। विचेष्टमानस्य च तस्य तानि कुजन्ति हंसाः सरसीव मत्ताः । चीराणि तस्याद्भ तदर्शनानि नेमानि तद्वन्मम रूपवन्ति ॥ वक्त्रं च तस्याद्भ तदर्शनीयं प्रव्याहृतं ह्लादयतीव चेतः। पंस्कोक्तिलस्येव च तस्य वाणी तं श्रण्वतो मे व्यथितोऽन्तरात्मा ॥ यथा वनं माधवमासि मध्ये समीरितं श्वसनेनेव भाति। तथा स भात्यत्तमपुण्यगन्धि निषेव्यमानः पवनेन तात ॥

मुसंयताश्चिप जटा विभक्ता द्वैधीकृता नातिसमा ललाटे। कणौं च चित्रैरिव चक्रवाकैः समावृतौ यस्य सरूपविद्भः।। तथा फलं वृत्तमथो विचित्रं समाहरत्त्पाणिना दक्षिगोन। तद्भूमिमासाद्य पुनः पुनश्च समुत्पतत्यद्भुतरूपमुच्चैः।।

Mahābhārata 3,112,1-10.

And invited by them innocently he accompanied them; and when he arrived in Anga, the kingdom of Lomapāda, there was a regular downpour after twelve years of complete drought. That was the greatness of Rishyaśringa:

ऋष्यश्रृङ्गः सुतो यस्य तपस्वी संयतेन्द्रियः। तपसो यः प्रभावेन वर्षयामास वासवम्।। अनावृष्टचां भयाद्यस्य ववर्षे वलवृत्रहा।

Mahābhārata 3,110,23-24.

The king offered the princess Śāntā, the daughter of his friend Daśaratha, whom he had adopted as his daughter, and was thus the elder sister of Rāma.

Rishyaśringa was so called as he had a deer's horn on his head and was innocent like the deer:

तस्यर्षेः श्रृङ्गं शिरसि राजन्नासीन्महात्मनः। तेनर्ष्यशृङ्ग इत्येवं तदा स प्रथितोऽभवत्॥

Mahābhārata 3,110,39.

He himself was born of a doe that died soon after child-birth, a transformed celestial nymph that lapped up the semen of sage Vibhandaka whose severe penance in mid-stream was caused to be distracted through Urvaśī. And the kindly sage Vibhandaka brought up this his son with great affection:

महाह्रदं समासाद्य काश्यपस्तपिस स्थितः ।..... तस्य रेतः प्रचस्कन्द दृष्ट्वाप्सरसमूर्वशीम् ॥..... सह तोयेन तृषिता मृगी तच्चापिवत्तदा ।..... देवकन्या मृगी भूत्त्वा मुनिं सूय विमोक्षिता ॥..... तस्यां मृग्यां समभवत्तस्य पुत्रो महामृनिः । ऋष्यश्रृङ्गस्तपोनित्यो वन एवाभ्यवर्तत ॥

Mahābhārata 3,110,34,39

It is not exactly in this case an enticement, mind tarnished by the allurement of a woman, but in pure innocence and affection for a new type of sages who became his friends as he thought. He came into the city, and slowly learnt the nature of the world itself, and entered the householder's life. It is he that performed the great sacrifice Putrakāmeshţi for Daśaratha and it is by the grace of Rishyaśringa that the four mighty sons were born to Daśaratha (Fig. 44):

प्राप्ताः कृच्छ्रादृष्यश्रृङ्गोपचारैः पुण्यश्रीकाः कोसलेन्द्रस्य पुत्राः ॥

Mahāvīracharita 1,24.

An excellent sculpture of the Kushāna period of the first century A. D. in the Mathurā Museum (Fig. 45) represents the young Rishyaśringa with the horn on his head:

ऋष्यश्रुङ्गो वनचरस्तपःस्वाध्यायतत्परः। अनभिज्ञः स नारीणां विषयानां सुखस्य च ॥ इन्द्रियार्थेरिभमतैर्नरिचत्तप्रमाथिभिः। पूरमानाययिष्यामः क्षिप्रं चाध्यवसीयताम् ॥ गणिकास्तत्र गच्छन्तु रुपवत्यः स्वलङ्कृताः। प्रलोभ्य विविधोपायैरानेष्यन्तीह सत्कृताः ॥ श्रत्वा तथेति राजा च प्रत्युवाच पुरोहितम्।..... पितुः स नित्यसंतुष्टो नातिचकाम चाश्रमात्।। जन्मप्रभृति दृष्ठपूर्वं तपस्विषु ।। तेन स्त्री वा पुमान्वा यच्चान्यत्सर्वं नगरराष्ट्रकम्।..... मधुरस्वनाः । ताश्चित्रवेषा प्रमदा गायन्त्यो सर्वा ऋषिपत्रमुपागम्य वचनमद्भवन् ।। कस्त्वं कि वर्तसे ब्रह्मन् ज्ञातुमिच्छामहे वयम् ।..... हार्दात्तस्य मतिर्जाता ह्याख्यातुं पितरं स्वकम् । पिता विभण्डकोऽस्माकं तस्याहं सुत औरसः ॥ ऋष्यश्रङ्क इति ख्यातं नाम कर्म च मे भुवि। समीपे शुभदर्शनाः ॥ इहाश्रमपदेऽस्माकं करिष्ये वोऽत्र पूजां वै सर्वेषां विधिपूर्वकम् ।..... प्रतिगृह्य तु तां पूजां सर्वा एव समुत्सुकाः ॥ ऋषेभीतास्त शोघं ता गमनाय मित दधः। अस्माकमिप मुख्यानि फलानीमानि वै द्विज।। गहाण प्रति भद्रं ते भक्षयस्व च मा चिरम्। ततस्तास्तं ममालिग्य सर्वा हर्षसमन्विताः ॥

मोदकान्त्रददुस्तस्मै भक्ष्यांश्च विविधान्तुभान् ।
तानि चास्वाद्य तेजस्वी फलानीति च मन्यते ॥
अनास्वादितपूर्वाणि वने नित्यनिवासिनाम् ।.....
उपमृत्य ततः सर्वास्तास्तमूचुरिदं वचः ॥
एह्याश्रमपदं सौम्य ह्यस्माकमिति चान्नुवन् ।
चित्राण्यत्र बहूनि स्युर्मूलानि च फलानि च ॥.....
श्रुत्वा तु वचनं तासां सर्वासां हृदयंगमम् ॥
गमनाय मितं चक्रे तं च निन्युस्तदा स्त्रियः ।
तत्र चानीयमाने तु विग्रे तिस्मन्महात्मिनि ॥
ववर्ष सहसा देवो जगत्त्रह्लायंस्तदा ।
वर्षणैवागतं विग्रं विषयं स्वं नराधिपः ॥
प्रत्युद्गभ्य मुनिं प्रह्लः शिरसा च मंही गतः ।
अर्घा च प्रददौ तस्मै न्यायतः सुसमाहितः ॥
अन्तःपुरं प्रवेश्यास्मै कन्यां दत्वा यथाविधि ।
शान्तां शान्तेन मनसा राजा हर्षमवाप सः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1,10,3-6,9-12,14-21,26-34.

This story as well as of the *rājarishi* Bharata who developed inordinate affection for a deer are the inspirers of a *Jātaka* illustrated in a medallion from Bhārhut of the second century B.C. (Fig. 46) where the miraculous birth of a child of a doe and kindly picked up for being reared by a sage is vividly presented.

The mind is such a subtle and fickle one that it is most difficult to control it. The *rishis* are great because they could control this most difficult of sensory organs. With the mind in contact with each of the receptive organs, one sees, hears, inhales, touches or tastes, and the experience is complete. But when the mind is not in contact and receptive, one may see but yet be oblivious of the vision, be attentive but yet fail to comprehend, smell but miss the fragrance, touch and yet be unaware, eat but yet miss the taste. But it also happens that the slightest giving in would mean an upperhand for the mind and the fall of the meditator who had so far conquered the mind. When Mandodarī weeps over the corpse of Rāvaṇa, she rightly says he once conquered all the *indriyas* and was great; but later he gave himself up to those very ones that were under his control, and that was the beginning of his fall. You conquered the three worlds, when you conquered your sensory organs long ago; as if recalling that

inimical attitude towards them, they have now completely triumphed over you:

इन्द्रियाणि पुरा जित्वा जितं त्रिभुवनं पुरा। स्मरद्भिरिव तद्दैरिमिन्ट्रियेरेव निजितः॥

Rāmāyana 6,114,18.

Bharata, a great king (rājarishi) who was more a sage than a ruler like Janaka, who ruled from his capital Sālagrāma, was always in meditation like Indradyumna of the Gajendramoksha story, ever thinking of Vāsudeva and constantly uttering the famous verse so often quoted giving the glorious names of Vishņu

यज्ञेशाच्युत गोविन्द माधवानन्त केशव। कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेशेत्याहरन्नास केवलम्।।

There was no one who was his enemy even in a dream as he could think of none other in thought than the Almighty. His greatest delight was to himself gather the most fragrant flowers, resplendant green kuśa grass to offer them in worship. He always avoided undesirable company and was an ascetic for all purposes.

Once he had gone for a bath to the river Mahānadī, and just as he finished his ablutions, he found a pregnant doe from the neighbouring forest come to quench her thirst. As she was just finishing lapping up the water there was a fearful roar of a lion. In fear she jumped up to run when the foetus fell into the water and was rapidly carried by the current. The kind-hearted king caught the young one from the foetus and saved it, even as the doe, in her fear, excitement and grief in losing her young one, died on the spot. The king now decided to bring up the young one and took it to his hermitage. He reared it tenderly with great affection feeding it carefully as if it were a little child. This little fawn would move about the hermitage without fear from any, being quite unafraid. It would even go a little distance and return in the evening and be back in the courtyard of the simple dwelling of the sage. The mind of the sage was so attached to this little animal that when it was away, it had its own misgivings and worry took the place of tranquility and peace. A great king, who had given up his empire, queens and sons, all his people and all the regal glory with the highest spirit of renunciation. now developed a sense of possession in this young frisking fawn. When there was any delay in its return, his anxiety was always whether it would have been eaten up by wolves. He would love to be scratched with the little growing horns of the young one, and in a hundred ways wondered how it would respond to him with such love.

This indeed was the cause of the break in his meditation and his spiritual uplift. At last, when at the time of his departure from the world, the deer looked at him as towards a father with tears in his eyes, and the sage also reciprocated with no other thought except his love for the deer, was reborn a deer in a forest, with this difference that he could remember his past (jātismara). This helped him to atone for his mistake and, even as an animal, he just tasted only dry leaves or grass and that too only the minimum to keep the body alive, and even as an animal practised such asceticism, that in his next birth he was born a learned Brahmana in a very devoted and religious family. He was full of all the highest knowledge of the sastras and mahāvidvā and having attained supreme knowledge, he saw the Almighty in all. As a great advaitin he made no difference between one or the other, and his mind was unaffected by any idea of differences. He would not study when put to school, and when he had the upanayana samskāra, he had no need to study the Veda either. He neglected ritual. He would not discuss sastrartha. Even when spoken to, he would just reply in one or two words, and for all appearances looked a dullard. He cared very little for his body either, of which he scarcely took any notice, and his clothes were not as clean as they were expected to be. The more sophisticated citizens avoided him as a complete rustic. He was just this because outside attention on him would distract his meditation. When neglected by the world, the real yogi attains the highest of flights in yoga. This is the direction of Brahmā Hiranyagarbha himself which he followed meticulously. To the outer world he appeared a fool, depraved in mind. He would eat anything and care little for taste. He did not require food in quantity or quality either. On the death of his father, his brothers and other kin put him on agricultural work, and just fed him in return. He looked boorish, fat, rather slow in his work, but whoever wanted his help, he gave it freely, and people

preferred him as there was nothing to be paid to him as wages except a little food offered.

The charioteer of the Sauvīra king found him excellently suited by appearance to be one of the palanquin-bearers and put him on that. The king was hurrying to meet Kapila, the great sage, to enquire of him what was the greatest good for him in life. Without a demur, he joined the palanquin bearers and bore the vehicle; but unaccustomed to it, he could not proceed as quickly as the others and in fact hampered their progress. The king finding the palanquin jogging along unevenly, enquired the reason and found that there was this new bearer that caused it. The king enquired of him, how being fat and able-bodied, it was surprising that within even such a short tramping he had developed probably fatigue, which he could not imagine was possible. The reply given by this great sage amazed the king. I am neither fat nor fatigued; neither am I carrying the palanquin nor you riding it. All this is a mere figment of your imagination. The feet carry the legs which support the thighs, and they the stomach, that in turn holds the neck and head. On this rests the object and the object moves on with you in it. Where is the question of my carrying? or my being fat or slim, fatigued or fresh. You imagine we are the litter carriers and you the king. Analyse your body, amalgum of head, shoulders, hands and legs, single them out and call them as such: are you then really a king in a palanquin. After all you are up on a tree having climbed it, rather on a mass of timber. Nobody who sees you would say that the king is on a tree or on timber. It is a combination of parts of timber that assumes the name palanquin. But is it the palanquin? All these questions put to the king created such wonder in him that he dismounted immediately, fell at his feet, begged pardon of him for having so insulted him, and told him the purpose of his journey to the great sage Kapila, the incarnation of the Almighty himself, to enquire what was the very best for him. Bharata reassured him that there was no insult, that their mutual talk meant nothing, as ultimately there was only One undivided, and That was the only One worth thinking about. He assured him that all that was considered the best was ephemeral and ultimately caused only loss and decay; kingdom, treasures, beauty, enjoyment, power, nothing was permanent; so how could

any of these be the highest? He also pointed out that people worshiped God in many ways with a desire for this or that which ultimately landed them only in a momentary evanescent joy that however had its terminus in ultimate sorrow. The highest and the noblest was to avoid all these. Meditation on the Supreme and oneness with Him meant supreme bliss and śānti. This is the great precept of the sage Ribhu whose words of wisdom are the most precious pearls in the universe of intellect. The story of Bharata as narrated in the Vishņupurāṇa, how he pretended to be a dullard (jaḍa), a lunatic or a halfwit, though endowed with the highest knowledge, all for complete concentration on the Almighty, so that he would not again descend as he earlier did by his attachment to the deer has, several other instances and a medallion from Bhārhut illustrates the Mūgapakka Jātaka (Fig. 47) where a prince pretends to be deaf and dumb to escape princely vanities.

भरतः स महीपालः सालग्रामेऽवसितकल । योगयुक्तः समाध्या च वासुदेवसदामनः ॥..... यज्ञेशाच्यत गोविन्द माधवानन्त केशव। कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेशेत्याह राजा स केवलम् ।।..... समित्पूष्पक्शादानं चके देविकयाकृते। नान्यानि चक्रे कर्माणि निःसङ्को योगतापसः ॥ जगाम सोऽभिषेकार्थमेकदा तु महानदीम्। सस्नी तत्र तदा चक्रे स्नानस्यानन्तरिकयाः॥ अथाजगाम तत्तीर्थं जलं पातं पिपासिता। आसन्नप्रसवा ब्रह्मन्नेकैव हरिणी वनात ॥ समभवत्तत्र पीतप्राये जले तया। सिंहस्य नादः सुमहान् सर्वप्राणिभयङ्करः ॥ ततः सा सहसा त्रासादाप्लूता निम्नगातटम । अत्युच्चरोहरोनास्या नद्यां गर्भः पपात सः ॥..... जग्राह स नुपो गर्भात्पतितां मृगपोतिकाम्।..... हरिणीं तां विलोक्याथ विपन्नां नुपतापसः। समादाय पुनराश्रममागतः। मगपोतं पोषणं पूष्यमाणश्च स तेन वव्धे मुने ।..... प्रातगंत्वातिद्रं च सायमायात्तथाश्रमम्। भरतस्याभ्दाश्रमस्योटजाजिरे ॥..... कि वक्रभक्षितो व्याद्रीः कि सिहेन निपातितः । चिरायमाने निष्कान्ते तस्यासीदिति मानसम् ॥.....

समाधिभङ्गस्तस्यासीत्तन्मयत्वादृतात्मनः । संत्यक्तराज्यभोगिंधस्वजनस्यापि भपतेः ॥..... पूत्रेण मृगपोतेन वीक्षितः। पितेव सास्रं तदाद्राक्षीत्यजन्त्राणानसाविप ॥ मुगमेव तन्मयत्वेन मैत्रेय नान्यत्किचिदचितयत् ।..... जम्बूमार्गे महारण्ने जज्ञे जातिस्मरो मृगः। जातिस्मरत्त्वादृद्विग्नः संसारस्य द्विजोत्तम ॥ विहाय मातरं सोथ सालग्राममुपाययौ। शुष्कैस्त्रिणेस्तथा पत्रैः स कुर्वन्नात्मपोषणम् ।। म्गत्वहेत्भृतस्य कर्मणो निष्कृति ययौ। तत्र चोत्सुष्टदेहोऽसी जज्ञे जातिस्मरो द्विजः ॥ सदाचारवतां शुद्धे योगिनां प्रवरे कुले। सर्वविज्ञानसंपन्नः सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्वित् ॥ अपरयत्स च मैत्रेय आत्मानं प्रकृते: परम् ।..... सारभतान्यभेदेन ददर्श स महामतिः। न पपाठ गुरुप्रोक्तं कृतोपनयनः श्रुतम् ॥ न ददर्श च कर्माणि शास्त्राणि जगृहे न च। उक्तोऽपि बहुशः किंचिज्जडं वाक्यमभाषत ।।..... अपध्वस्तवपुः सोऽय मलिनाम्बरध्गिद्वजः। विलन्नदन्तान्तरः सर्वेः परिभूतः स नागरैः ॥..... भुङ्क्ते कुल्माषवट्यादि शाकं वन्यफलं कणान् । यद्यदाप्नोति सुबहु तदन्ते कालसंयमम्।। सोऽथ भातृभातृव्यवान्धवै:। पितयू परते कारितः क्षेत्रकर्मादिकदन्नाहारपोषितः ॥..... तं तादशमसंस्कारं विप्राकृतिविचेष्टितम्। क्षत्ता सौबीरराजस्य विष्टियोग्यममन्यत ।। स राजा शिविकारूढो गन्तुं कृतमितिर्द्विज। किपलर्षेवराश्रमम्।। बभवेक्ष्मतीतीरे श्रेयः किमत्र संसारे दुःखप्राये नृणामिति । प्रष्टुं तं मोक्षधर्मज्ञं किपलाख्यं महामुनिम्।। उवाह शिविकां तस्य मुहुर्वचनचोदितः। नणां विष्टिगृहीतानामन्येषां सोऽपि मध्यगः ॥ गृहीतो विष्टिना विप्रः सर्वज्ञानैकभाजनः। जातिस्मरोऽसौ पापक्षयकाम उवाह तम्।। ययौ जडगतिः सोऽथ युगमात्रावलोकनम्। कूर्वन्मतिमतां श्रेष्ठस्तदन्ये त्वरितं ययुः ॥ विलोक्य नृपतिः सोऽथ विषमं शिविकागतिम् । किमेतदित्याह समं गभ्यतां शिविकावहाः ।।.....

शिविकोद्वाहकाः प्रोच्रयं यातीत्यसत्त्वरम्। कि श्रान्तः स्वल्पमघ्वानं त्वयोढा शिविका मम।। किमायासासहो नित्यं पीवानसि निरीक्ष्यसे। नाहं पीवान्न चैवोढा शिविका भवतो मया।। न श्रान्तोऽस्मि न चायासो वोढव्योऽसि महीपते। प्रत्यक्षं भवता भूप यह ष्टं मम वलवानवलश्चेति वाच्यं पश्चाद्विशेषणम् । त्वयोडा शिविका चेति त्वय्यद्यापि च संस्थिता।। मिथ्यैतदप्यत्रभवाञ्छणोत् वचनं अहं त्वं च तथान्ये च भूतैरुह्याम पार्थिव। गुणप्रवाहपतितो भूतवर्गोऽपि यात्ययम् ॥ आत्मा शुद्धोऽक्षरः शान्तो निर्गुणः प्रकृतेः परः। प्रवृद्धचपचयो नास्य एकस्याखिलजन्तुषु ।।..... तथान्यजन्त्भिस्तुल्यः शिविकोत्थो न केवलम्। शैलद्रमगृहोत्थोऽपि पृथिवीसंभवोऽपि भवतो मेऽखिलस्यास्य ममत्वेनोपवृंहितः। एवम्बत्वाभवन्मीनी स बहञ्शिवकां द्विज: । सोऽपि राजाऽवतीर्योव्यां तत्पादी जगृहे त्वरम् ॥ भो भो विस्जय शिविकां प्रसादं कुरु मे द्विज। कथ्ततां को भवानत्र जाल्मरूपघरः स्थितः।। श्रयतां कोऽहमित्येवं वक्तुं भूप न शक्यते। उपभोगनिमित्तं च सर्वत्रागमनित्रया ॥ स्खदु:खोपभोगौ तु तौ देशाद्य पपादकौ। धर्माधर्मोद्भवी भोक्तं जन्तुर्देशादिमृच्छति ।।..... शब्दोऽहमिति दोषाय नात्मन्येष तथैव च। अनात्मन्यात्मविज्ञानं शब्दो वा भ्रान्तिलक्षणः ॥ त्वं राजा शिविका चेंयं वयं वाहाःपूरःसराः। अयं च भवतो लोको न सदेतन्न पोच्यते।। वृक्षाद्दारु तत्रश्चेयं शिविका त्वदिधिष्ठिता। क्व वृक्षसंज्ञा जातास्य दारुसंज्ञाथवा नृप ॥ वक्षारुढो महाराजो नायं वदति ते जनः। न च दारुणि सर्वस्त्वां ब्रवीति शिविकागतम् ॥ दारुसंघातो रचनास्थितसंश्रितः। अन्बीध्यतां नुपश्रेष्ठ ताद्भेदे शिविका त्वया।।.... एतद्विवेकविज्ञानं यदणेषेषु जंतुषु। भवता दशितं विप्र तत्परं प्रकृतेर्महत्।।

नाहं वहामि शिबिकां शिबिका न मिय स्थिता। शरीरमन्यदस्मत्तो येनायं शिविका घता ॥ महाभागं कपिलिषमहं द्विज। प्रष्टमभ्यद्यतो गत्त्वा श्रेयः कि तत्र शँस मे ॥ तदन्तरे च भवता यदिदं वाक्यमीरितम। तेनैव परमार्थायँ त्विय चेतः कपिलिंषभगवतः सर्वभृतस्य वै द्विज। जगन्मोहनाशायोर्वीमुपागतः ॥ विष्णोरंशो स एव भगवान्न नमस्माकं हितकाम्यया। द्विज ।।.... प्रत्यक्षतामत्रगतो यथैतद्भवतो भ्यः पुच्छिसि कि श्रेय: परमार्थं न पुच्छिस । श्रेयांस्यपरमर्थार्थान्यशेषान्येव भुपते ॥ आत्मा ध्येयः सदा भूप योगयुक्तस्तथा परः । श्रेंयस्तस्यैव संयोगः श्रेयो यो परमात्मना ॥ ध्यानं चैवातमनो भूप परमार्थार्थशब्दितम्। भेदकारि परेभ्यस्तत्परमार्थो न भेदवान ॥

Vishņupurāņa 2,13,4,9,11-15,17-21. 23,29,31,41,45-54,56,61,67,70,72-74,76,77,82,87-91; 2,14, 3-4,7-10, 12,15,26.

The *rishis* had each one his own pet preference and also worshipped that preference as if it were the summum bonum. In fact they thought of that as the Almighty itself. In the *Taittirīya Upanishad* it is clearly given that the great sage Satyavachas son of Rathītara felt that truth was God, worshipped truth and practised it all his life. No wonder that the *Yajus* hymn gives it

सत्यमिति सत्यवचा राथीत्यः।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1.

Another sage, Taponitya, son of Paurusishti, who was ever after the highest penance, considered penance to be the Almighty:

तप इति तपोनिष्ठः पौरुशिष्टिः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1

The sage Nāka, son of Mudgala, thought the highest was svādhyāya and pravachana or study and teaching of the Vedas:

स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाको मौद्रल्यः।

Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9,1.

In fact the opening verse of the *Bhāgavata* meditates on Paramātmā as *Satya*. We meditate on that Highest Truth, from which proceed birth, existence and decay of the universe, that closely moves in and around every object though yet apart, omniscient and omnipotent, that by baring its mind caused the first seer (Brahmā) to reveal the import of the *Veda* that baffles even the greatest sages, and in which the three *guṇas*, *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are as factual as the coordination between light, water and earth as in अग्रेरापः, अद्भाशः पृथिवी and that by its glory always rejects all that is illusory:

जन्माद्यस्य ययोन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट् तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्मन्ति यत्सूरयः। तेजोविरमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा घाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं घीमहि॥

Bhāgavata 1,1,1.

The same is given by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭapāda only in another mode of expression when he says that fortunate devotees revel in that easily comprehended from of the Almighty that is Pure Existence, sweet in reflecting the tenor of the *Veda*, pure in its overlooking all differences as this and that, composed of a body of the major and subtle elements as known from Vyāsa's teachings, that is luminous enwombing as it does the highest bliss uncovered by its own immaculate quality:

सत्त्वं यत्तत्पराभ्यामपरिकलनतो निर्मलं तेन ताव-द्भूत्तैभूतेन्द्रियैस्ते वपुरिति बहुशः श्रूयते व्यासवाक्यात् । तत्स्वच्छत्वाद्यदच्छादिति परसुखचिद्रर्भनिर्भासरुपं तिस्मन्धन्या रमन्ते श्रुतिमतिमधुरे सुग्रहे विग्रहे ते ॥

Nārāyanīyam 1,1.

The special greatness of satya is almost read into the utterances of the rishis that could never go in vain. That is why in the Abhij-nānaśākuntalam, it is stated that the utterance of the rishi is not a mere wishful hope for the best, but a sure thing to happen. Śakuntalā very innocently asks Kanva when she would come back again to this their beloved hermitage, the sage replies in a manner that it should be fulfilled in its entirety. He almost has before him a vision of all that is to happen. That is why when Śakuntalā is reunited with Dushyanta and Aditi requests Kaśyapa to send word to Kanva of this glad news,

he at once remarks that by his great penance everything is before his eyes very clearly seen:

तपःप्रभावात्प्रत्यक्षं सर्वमेव तत्रभवतः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7

Kanva reassures Śakuntalā that she would again be back in this peaceful hermitage, after having for long been the cowife of the vast earth surrounded by the ocean on all sides, and after enthroning the unparalleled prince, her noble son born of Dushyanta, to support the burden of the household and the state, again back with her husband to enjoy the peace of a saintly life:

भूत्वा चिराय चतुरन्तमहीसपत्नी दौष्यन्तिमप्रतिरथं तनयं निवेश्य। भर्त्रा तद्यपितकुटम्बभरेण साधं शान्ते करिष्यसि पदं पुनराश्रमेऽस्मिन्॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,20.

When Śakuntalā bows to Kanva, he blesses her that she should be ever the most beloved to her husband as Śarmishthā was to Yayāti: and similarly should have her son an emperor like Śarmishthā who bore Puru of Yayāti:

ययातेरिव शर्मिष्ठा भुर्तर्बहुमता भव। सुतं त्वमपि संराजं सेव पूरुमवाप्नुहि॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,7.

Immediately the aged female ascetic Gautamī remarks, Oh! reverend Sir, this is your boon which would never fail. It is not a mere blessing which is a wish: भगवन्। वर: खल्येष नाशी:। When Māricha (i.e. Kaśyapa, exclaims that by the greatest good fortune Śakuntalā was a paragon of virtue, here was the perfection of desired offspring in this little boy, here was Dushyanta himself so great; and indeed it appeared a coming together of the coveted triad, faith, righteous wealth and ethical action:

दिष्टचा शकुन्तला साध्वी सदपत्यिमदं भवान् । श्रद्धा वित्तं विधिश्चेति त्रितयं वः समागतम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7,29

Dushyanta promptly responds, Oh reverend Sir! the fruition of desires here really precedes, and sighting you, the cause of it, is later. How unique indeed is your favour. The flower appears first and then comes the fruit. The clouds come first and then the rain. The sequence of cause and effect is normally this. But in the case of your favour, prosperity precedes even your utterance of favour:

भगवन् ! प्रागिभिष्ठेतसिद्धिः पश्चाद्दर्शनम् । अपूर्वः खलु वोऽनुग्रहः । कुतः । उदेति पूर्वं कुसुगं ततः फलं घनोदयः प्राक्तदनन्तरं पयः । निमित्तनैमितिकयोरयं कमस्तव प्रसादस्य पुरस्तु संपदः ॥ Abhijñānaśākuntlam 1.

No wonder Mātali, the charioteer of Indra, explains how the rishis that are great creators (prajāpatis) thus show their favour:

एवं विघातारः प्रसीदन्ति

Abhijñānaśākuntlam 7.

It is again remarkably well put by Bhavabhūti that to the words of the great *rishis* of yore, the meaning of an utterance races to go and attach itself to the words composing it:

ऋषीणां पुनराद्यानां वाचमथोंऽनु घावति ।

Mahāviracharita

He repeats this idea through the mouth of Arundhatī who declares that there should be no doubt about the positive truth in the occurrence of whatever is uttered by the sages that have realised the Brahman and shine in their glorious lustre, as in their speech is present auspicious Śrī herself, and never can they utter anything that can fail:

अविभू तज्योतिषां ब्राह्मणानां ये व्याहारास्तेषु मा संशयो भूत्। भद्रा ह्योपां वाचि लक्ष्मीनियक्ता नैते वाचं विष्लुतार्थां वदन्ति।।

Uttararāmacharita 4.18.

There are several stories to show how when a great *rishi* makes an utterance it has to come true. It cannot fail or be withdrawn. In other words it can never go in vain. In the *Kathopanishad*, it is because even though it was in anger, the sage had said, 'I give you to Death',

and the sage having said that under extreme provocation, almo as 'go to hell', Nachiketas had immediately to go to the home of Yama. The story is even more elaborate in the Mahābhārata, where the truth of the utterance of the sage having to be protected had immediately to find himself in the residence of Yama. In the Anuśāsanaparva, the story is graphic about the feelings of Uddalaki the poor father of Nachiketas. The rishi was very old and feeble, and being engaged in sacrifice had his son to attend on him. Having bathed in the river, collected and placed Kuśa grass, sacrificial twigs, flowers and others like water vessel, roots and fruits for food, he forgot to bring them along and sent his son who was studying with him the Veda to bring them from the river bank where they were lying. But the current of the river had already carried them away and the boy returned and explained. The feeble rishi, exhausted, hungry and thirsty, easily angered, cursed his son to see Yama. Hit by this utterance of his that was almost a thunderbolt, the boy brought both his hands in reverence and, even as he was requesting him to be gracious, fell down The father looking at the son fallen senseless and dead, immediately cursed and blamed himself and himself fell on the ground, lamenting for the boy. So passed the night, the father shedding tears for his son, with other rishis come to console him. Towards dawn, the boy slowly moved on his Kuśa bed like the crop in the field brightening up by fresh showers of rain. Eagerly the father asked his son who arose like one from a dream and wafted divine perfume. Oh my son! have you won celestial worlds by your merit? It is my good fortune you have returned to mortal life. The boy replied as his father and all the sages listened. According to your command I had immediately gone to the kingdom of Yama and saw him seated in state in his royal hall, lustrous like gold, Yama the son of Surva offered me due worship with arghya, all for your sake and addressed me. My dear! you are not really dead; but you are here since your father, a great sage of immense penance and lustrous like fire had asked you to go and see me. His word could never go in vain. That is why I have received and seen you. You may now go back. Your father is sorrowing for you. What can I do for you as my dear guest. Please ask any boons and I shall grant you:

ऋषिरुद्दालिकदीक्षामुपगम्य ततः सूतम् । त्वं मामपचरस्वेति नचिकेतमभाषत ॥ समाप्ते नियमे तस्मिन्महर्षिः पुत्रमत्रवीत् । उपस्पर्शनसक्तस्य स्वाध्यायाभिरतस्य च ॥ इध्म दर्भाः सूमनसः कलशश्चातिभोजनम् । विस्मृतं मे तदादाय नदीतीरादिहाव्रज ।। गत्वानवाप्य तत्सर्वं नदीवेगसमाप्लूतम्। न पश्यामि तदित्येवं पितरं सोऽत्रवीनमूनिः ॥ क्षुत्पिपासाश्रमाविष्टो मुनिरुद्दोलिकस्तदा। यमं पश्येति तं पूत्रमशपत्स महातपाः ॥ तथा स पित्राभिहितो वाग्वज्रेण कृताञ्जलिः। ब्रवन्नेव गतसत्वोऽपतद्भवि॥ प्रसीदेति निचकेतं पिता दृष्ट्वा पतितं दुःखमूच्छितः। कि मया कृतभित्युक्त्वा निपपात महीतले॥ तस्य दःखपरीतस्य स्वं पुत्रमनुशोचत:। व्यतीतं तदहःशेषं सा चोग्रा तत्र शर्वरी।। पित्रयेणाश्रप्रपातेन नचिकेत: क्रह्र । प्रास्पन्दच्छयने कौश्ये वृष्टया सस्यभिवाप्लुतम् ॥ स पर्यप्रच्छत्तं पूत्रं क्षीरां पर्यागतं पून:। दिव्यैर्गन्धः समादिग्धं क्षीणस्वप्नमिवोत्थितम ॥ अपि पुत्र जिता लोकाः शुभास्ते स्वेन कर्मणा। दिष्टचा चासि पून: प्राप्तो न हि ते मानुषं वपु: ॥ प्रत्यक्षदर्शी सर्वस्य पूत्र पृष्टो महात्मना। स तां वार्ता पितुर्मध्ये महर्षीणां न्यवेदयत् ॥ क्वंन्भवच्छासनमाञ्च यातो ह्यहं विशालां रुचिरप्रभावाम । वैवस्वंती प्राप्य सभामपश्यं सहस्रशो योजनहेमभाजाम् ॥..... वैवस्वतोऽध्यादिभिरहंणैश्च भवत्कृते पूजयामास मां स: ।..... यमोऽब्रवीन्मां न मृतोऽसि सौभ्य यमं पश्येत्याह स त्वां तपस्वी ॥ पिता प्रदीप्ताग्निसमानतेजा न तच्छ्क्यमन्तं विप्र कर्त्म। प्रतिगच्छस्व तात शोचत्यसौ तव देहस्य कर्ता॥ ददामि किंचापि मनः प्रणीतं प्रियातिथेस्तव कामान्वणीष्व।

Mahābhārata 13,71,2-19.

Vītahavya a Haihaya king aided by his sons of great valour overcame Haryaśva, the ruler of Kāśī, and in turn his son and grandson Divodāsa, who however, by the grace of Bharadvāja bore a son Pratardana who proved invincible in battle, extirpated the army and the sons of Vītahavya, who hotly pursued by Pratardana, in

despair repaired to the hermitage of sage Bhṛigu and sought refuge there. Pratardana followed and demanded Vītahavya to be handed over to him. Bhṛigu, true to his word of protection to the king, and aware of the might of his penance, though with trepidation as he so uttered, denied the presence of any except Brāhmaṇas in his hermitage, when Pratardana, unable to refute the utterance of a sage which was always the truth, turned back and left. And now Bhṛigu who, even as he spoke to Pratardana had accomplished his task of making Vītahavya a Brāhmaṇa by his saṅkalpa or wish to do संकल्पः कमं मानसन् had now only to pronouce him a Brāhmaṇa, and lo! he became forthwith a Brāhmaṇa, his line of progeny thereafter claiming Bhṛigu the foster father and Vītahavya as a rishi of the Vādhūla family:

भृगोराश्रममासाद्य वीतहब्यवधोद्यतः । प्रतर्दनो मुनि प्राह मुञ्चैनमिति दुर्मदः ।। तच्छ्रुत्वा क्षत्रियो नेह कश्चित्सर्वे द्विजा वयम् । इत्युवाच भृगुर्भीतोऽसत्यादकम्पत ।। क्षत्रामिधानात्प्रश्रष्टं शत्रुं ज्ञात्वा प्रतर्दने । याते भृगुर्वीतहब्यं सत्यवाग्बाह्मग्रां व्यधात् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13, 1444-1446.

That is the greatness of a *rishi* whose words can never be anything except satya, The power of penance in Bhrigu accomplished in a trice what Viśvāmitra attained after severe penance for thousands of years, and which sage Matanga could not attain even though he could become a celestial by severe asceticism:

पुनः पुनः स तपसा धूमायितजगत्रयः। इन्द्रादवाप देवत्वं न तु ब्रह्मण्यमुत्तमम्।। छन्दोदेव इति ख्यातः स मातङ्गाभिधः पुरा। खेचरोऽभूनमृगाक्षीणां पूज्यः परमवल्लभः।।

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1436-1437.

Even when Brahmā pronounced Viśvamitra a Brahmarishi, he was not content or so convinced as when Vaśishtha described him so at the request of Brahmā and the celestials themselves:

पितामहवच: श्रुत्वा सर्वेषां च दिवौकसाम् । कृत्वा प्रणामं मुदित: व्याजहार महामुनिः ॥ ब्रह्मण्यं यदि मे प्राप्तं दीर्घमायुस्तथैव च । ओंकारश्य वषटाकारो वेदाश्च वरयन्तु माम् ॥ क्षत्रवेदिवदां श्रेष्ठो ब्रह्मवेदिवदामिष । ब्रह्मपुत्रो विषष्ठो मामेवं वदतु देवता: ॥..... तत: प्रसादितो देवैर्विशिष्ठो जपतां वर: । सक्यं चकार श्रह्मिष्रेवमिस्त्वित चाब्रवीत् ॥ ब्रह्मिष्त्वं न सन्देह: सर्वं संपद्यते तव ।

Rāmāyaṇa 1,65,22-25

It is this that Bhavabhūti reiterates in another context where Vasishtha extols Viśvāmitra as a *Brahmarishi*, unasailable, in whom immeasurable penance is aflame with lustre, far exceeding the power of description in words or understanding through the mind, in short overwhelming:

सत्यमीदृशो विश्वामित्र:। यहाचां विषयमतीत्य चेतसां वा पर्यायात्परमितशायनस्य वा यत्। ब्रह्मपौ तदिह दुरासदे समिद्धं तेजोभिज्वलित महत्तपोऽप्रमेयम्॥

and Viśvāmitra with reverence to Vāśishṭha accepts his complement not in vanity but as truth which alone can emanate from him:

स्तौषि चेत्सत्य एवास्मि सत्यसन्घा हि ते गिरः।

Mahavīracharita 4,15,16.

There is such firm faith in the truth of a sage's word particularly of one like Jaratkāru, that when Vāsuki is alarmed to learn from his sister that the sage had left her, offended at what he considered an insult in waking him up to perform twilight worship for the setting sun, and grieves that his effort to have a nephew who could save the world of snakes from annihilation has failed, is reassured by her that before leaving he had assured her with the word 'asti' 'there is' meaning that in her womb was a great sage in the making. Her confidence in the veracity of his statement was such that Vāsuki feels assured that the saviour of the reptile race was sure to be born and the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya when it would be performed as predicted could be stopped by him. Asked by me on the question of progeny he said 'it is there' and left. Even as a joke he had never uttered an untruth. Why should he be dubious regarding our important future? Oh nāga princess! grieve not. A son will be

born to you like the flaming fire, a righteous *rishi* learned in the *Vedas*. Oh brother! So said my husband whose only wealth is penance and then left.

पृष्टो मयाऽपत्यहेतोः स महात्मा महातपाः । अस्तीत्युत्तरमृद्दिश्य ममेदं गतवाँश्च सः ।। स्वैरेष्विप न तेनाहं स्मरामि वितथं वचः । उक्तपूर्वं कुतो राजन् सांपराये स वक्ष्यति ॥ न संतापस्त्वया कार्यः कार्यः प्रति भुजङ्कमे । उत्पत्स्यित स ते पुत्रो ज्वलनाकंसमप्रभः ॥ इत्युक्त्वा स हि मां भ्रातगंतो भर्ता तपोधनः ।

Mahābhārata 1,48,10-13.

Satya has been worshipped tremendously and it has been the belief that the highest in character has the highest place in life and society. Even when endowed with all the qualities of his tapasyā and vidyā or supreme knowledge, the Brāhmaṇa is considered great mainly for his satyavāk. It is only satya that really makes him a Brāhmaṇa. Otherwise he should be considered a brahmabandhu one distantly connected with a real potential Brāhmaṇa, satyavādī. Asks, and rightly, Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita how among us there could be such colossal ignoramuses as could put such questions that would make one shudder: Who is that Vyāsa, who really is Manu and who indeed is Yājñavalkya, who have preached from housetops good counsel for us like fathers to their children. We see that they are the kith of the entire world, peerless oceans of compassion, and we see ourselves also as huge endless mountains of dark ignorance and untruth, in short brahmabandhus, shameless blot in Brāhmaṇa birth:

कोनु व्यासः क इह स मनुः कोन्वसौ याज्ञवल्कयो । यैरुद्धुष्टं हितमसकृदस्मासु पित्रेव पुत्रे। पश्यामस्ता निरुपिषकृपासागरान् लोकबन्धून् पश्यामोऽस्मान्निरविषतमःक्ष्माधरान् ब्रह्मबन्धून्।।

Śāntivilāsa 24.

Rāma is considered Brahmaṇya because he is satyavādī. Krishṇa is Brahmaṇya according to the Vishṇusahasranāma because he is a satyavādī. The story of Satyakāma in the Chhāndogya is an excellent example of this principle. He went to Gautama, the son of Haridru-

mat, desiring to become a pupil of his, to learn the highest supreme knowledge, and begged of him to take him as such:

सत्यकामो ह जावालो.....हिरद्रुमतं गौतममेत्योवच। ब्रह्मचर्यं भगवति वत्स्यामि । उपेयां भगवन्तमिति ।

The teacher asked him affectionately from what family he came. The poor boy replied that he did not know it. When he had just asked his mother she had said that when she was young and he was born, she was engaged all the time in household duties, attending on guests, and so could not know to what family she belonged. My name is Jabālā, and you are named Satyakāma. So you are Satyakāma Jābāla. And so he describes himself as Satyakāma Jābāla:

तं होवाच, किंगोत्रोनु, सौभ्य असीति। स होवाच नाहमेतद्वेद, भोः, यद्गोत्रोऽहमस्मि। अपृच्छं मातरं, सा मा प्रत्यव्रवीत्, बह्वहं चरन्ती परिचारिणी यौवने त्वां अलभे, साहं एतन्न वेद यद्गोत्रस्त्व-मसि, जवाला तु नामाहमस्मि, सत्यकामो नाम त्वमसीति, सोऽहं सत्यकामो जावालोऽस्मि, भोः, इति।

The teacher immediately responded and said emphatically that none except a Brāhmaṇa could thus describe a fact, and directing him to bring the sacred twigs as symbol of fire worship and brahmacharya, affectionately addressed him 'my dear' receiving him as his pupil, as he had not departed from the truth. He then initiated him and set duties on him as usual on other disciples:

तं होवाच । नैतदब्राह्मणो विवक्तुमर्हति । सिमधं, सीभ्य, आहर, उप त्वा नेष्ये न सत्यादगा इति । तमुपनीय कृशानामवलानां चतुः शता गा निराकृत्योवाच, इमाः, सौभ्य, अनुसंव्रजेति ।

Chhāndogya Upanishad 4,4,3-5.

In the Mahānārayaṇopanishad rightly has it been said that the fruit of satya is that truth is the ultimate of the highest and those that attain the highest heaven, the highest worlds of bliss, would never fall thence. Truth is the characteristic of the good ones on earth and that is why every one delights in truth:

सत्यं परं । परं सत्यं । सत्येन न सुवर्गाल्लोकाच्च्यवन्ते कदाचन, सत्यं हि सत्यं । तस्मात् सत्ये रमन्ते । Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad 78,1. By truth the wind blows, the sun shines in the heavens because of truth, truth is the mainstay of speech itself. In short everything is established in truth. Hence, it is said and rightly that truth is the supreme means of bliss:

सत्तेन वायुरावाति । सत्येनादित्यो रोचते दिवि । सत्यं वाच: प्रतिष्ठा । सत्ये सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् । तस्मात्सत्यं परमं वदन्ति । Mahānarāyaṇa Upanishad 79,2.

Bhīshma is the greatest example of vindication of satya. He had made a vow and he kept it. That vow was such a terrible one that the prince, son of Śantanu and Gangā, originally named Devavrata, was renamed Bhīshma because of his terrific vow impossible of others. When Gangā handed over this noble young prince to Śantanu, she informed him how he was the last of all her children saved by the king, who had learnt the Vedas from Vaśishtha himself, all the astras and śastras both from Śukra and Brihaspati and equalled Paraśurāma himself in Dhanurveda, and withal was most proficient in statecraft (rājadharma), charming, devoted, full of humility, an ideal prince indeed. The king joyously received him and made him the crown prince. The great feature about Bhīshma here is this, that as the crown prince, he won the heart of the entire kingdom:

राष्ट्रं च रञ्जयामास वृत्तेन भरतर्षभ।

Mahābhārata 1,100,44,

Coming to know that his father had fallen in love with the charming and fragrant-smelling damsel Satyavatī, who was by destiny brought up in the home of a fisherman, but could not obtain her without a promise that the son born of her would succeed him as king, Bhīshma, unable to know the truth of the affair from his own father who would not reveal it, but somehow getting acquainted with it from an old minister, himself went to the chief of the fishermen to request his daughter to be given in wedlock to his father. Learning the condition laid down from his own mouth, he swore on the spot that the son born of her to his father would be the king and no one else. Take this as my vow in truth: none born or yet unborn could state as I have done. I shall act in consonance with your wish that the one who is born of her shall be our king:

इदं मे व्रतमादत्स्व सत्यं सत्यवतां वर । नैव जातो न वाजात ईंदृशं वक्तुमुत्सहेत् ॥ एवमेतत्करिष्यामि यथा त्वमनुभाषसे । योऽस्यां जनिष्यते पुत्रः स नो राजा भविष्यति ॥

But still the fisherman objected. He had his own doubt that even if Bhīshma renounced the kingdom he was entitled to in favour of his step-brother when born, it may not be that Bhīshma's progeny would give up their claim to the throne. This was what still troubled him in deciding the factor:

राजमध्ये प्रतिज्ञातमनुरूपं तवैव तत्। नान्यथा तन्महाबाहो संशयोऽत्र न कश्चन। तबापत्यं भवेद्यत्तु तत्र न: संशायो महान्।।

Here comes the greatness and glory of Bhīshma that he made a proclamation impossible from any other. Oh chief of fishermen! note this word of mine which I utter with immaculate truth as all these princes assembled listen. I repeat this that for my father, Oh kings and princes! I have already renounced the kingdom. I now make a determination even regarding my own progeny. From today I shall observe complete continence. Even childless I shall have in heaven the highest celestial abodes. I have never from my birth uttered a falsehood and as long as there is breath in my body I shall never produce progeny. Give your daughter to my father. I give up completely both the kingdom and conjugal happiness and I tell you in truth that I shall practice the highest asceticism:

and here is the wonderful episode of the change of the name Devavrata by the celestials and the sages from heaven, amazed and delighted to see a mahāpurusha like this who could make such a truthful statement to maintain which in life was the most arduous task. Here is the word uttered by the celestials, nymphs, sages and all those assembled in the firmament, overjoyed and thrilled as they showered sweet-smelling flowers on him as with one accord was heard the sound, 'This is Bhīshma' as a commentary on the terrible truth spoken:

ततोऽन्तरिक्षेऽप्सरसो देवाः सर्षिगणास्तदा। अभ्यवर्षन्त कुसुमैर्भीष्मोऽयमिति चाब्रुवन्।।

Mahābhārata 1,100,85-87,91,92,94-98

When however the family of the Kurus was threatened with annihilation when Vichitravīrya, son of Satyavatī by Śantanu, died young without a son to succeed him, and Satyavatī requested Bhīshma to get crowned as king and continue the line through his progeny, with due respect to his step-mother he firmly reiterated his vow made long ago regarding both kingdom and progeny:

मम पुत्रस्तव भ्राता वीर्यवान् सुप्रियश्च ते। बाल एव गतः स्वर्गमपुत्रः पुरुषर्षभ ॥..... मन्नियोगान्महाबाहो धर्मं कर्तुं मिहार्हसि ॥ राज्ये चैवाभिषिच्यस्व भारताननुशाधि च। दारांश्च कुरु धर्मेण मा निमज्जीः पितामहान्॥

Mahābhārata 1,103,8,10-11

Bhīshma's remarkable peroration to explain his verdict on his vow rejecting regal state and matrimony is one of the most thrilling in literature pronounced by the greatest rājarishi of his age. I would gladly give up sovereignty over the three worlds, the kingdom of heaven itself or even any higher even than both these, but would never give up truth. Earth may abandon smell, water its taste, light may give up its form, wind its quality of touch, the sun may lose lustre, fire may shed its heat, the sky may be void of its essential quality of sound, the moon may shed the cool nature of its rays, the mighty Indra that killed Vritra may cast aside his valour and even Yama the just may throw over justice, but I shall, however, never decide to abandon truth. And the wondering Satyavatī has to confess

that she was fully conscious of his superdevotion to truth and his great power to create at will heavenly spheres by his lustre:

परित्यजेयं त्रैलोक्यं राज्यं देवेषु वा पुनः ।
यद्वाप्यधिकमेताभ्यां न तु सत्यं कथंचन ।।
त्यजेच्च पृथिवी गन्धमापश्च रसमात्मनः ।
ज्योतिस्तथा त्यजेद्रूपं वायुः स्पर्शगुरां त्यजेत् ।।
प्रभां समुत्सृजेदर्को धूमकेतुस्तथोष्मताम् ।
त्यजेच्छव्दं तथाकाशं सोमः शीतांशुतां त्यजेत् ।।
विक्रमं वृत्रहा जह्याद्धमं जह्याच्च धर्मराट् ।
न त्वहं सत्यमुत्स्रष्टुं व्यवसेयं कथंचन ।।.....
माता सत्यवती भीष्ममुवाच तदनन्तरम ।
जानामि ते स्थिति सत्ये परां सत्यपराक्रम ॥
इच्छन् सृजेथास्त्रीन् लोकानन्यांस्त्वं स्वेन तेजसा ।

Mahābhārata 1,103,15-21.

Bhīshma's discourses from his śaratalpa (Fig. 48) are the most exhilarating ethical code of conduct in life with satya as the root of all.

The legend at the beginning of the Harshacharita itself which gives the descent of Sarasvatī from heaven to be born as a mortal on earth is because the ire of Durvasa was roused and yet he had pronounced that she should go to the earth and be born a mortal. Once uttered that was a truth which could never be erased, which even he himself could not withdraw in spite of the entreaties of the several rishis including his own father Atri. Not only the rishis but even Brahmā himself pacified Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī and though he admonished Durvāsā for his undue anger which as a sage he should have controlled, he felt he himself could not interfere in this natural law of truth triumphing, and this Bana puts dramatically. So entreated by the rishis with the words Oh reverend Sir! this is not a case for a curse, and coaxingly beseeched by his disciples with hands brought together in reverence exclaiming Oh master! please forgive this one transgression, and being obstructed by the age Atri himself Oh my son! do not ruin your penance, Durvāsā, beyond himself with rage, exclaimed Oh shameless one! I shall bring down your stature born of pride in possessing an atom of knowledge. Go down below to the world of the mortals! So saying he poured water to the accompaniment of the curse. Sarasvatī herself stopped Sāvitrī preparing herself for a counter curse with these words of entreaty Oh my companion! control your anger! even with mind clouded and unpolished, Brāhmanas by their own birth have to be honoured:

ततो मर्षय भगवन् ! अभूमिरेष शापस्येत्यनुनाथ्यमानोऽपि तापसैः, उपाध्याय ! स्खलितमेकं क्षमस्वेति वद्धाञ्जलिपुटैः प्रसाद्यमनोऽपि स्वशिष्यैः, पुत्रक ! मा कृथास्तपसः प्रत्यूहमिति निवार्यंमणोऽप्य- त्रिणा, रोषावेशविवशो दुर्वासा 'दुर्विनीते ! व्यपनयामि ते विद्या- लवावलेपजनितमुन्नतिम् । अधस्ताद्रच्छ मर्त्यलोकमित्युक्त् वा तच्छापोदकं विसंसर्जं । ततः प्रतिशापदानोद्यतां च सावित्रीं 'सिख ! संहर रुषम् । असंस्कृतमतयोऽपि जात्यैव द्विजन्मानो माननीयाः' इत्यभिदधाना सरस्वत्यैवेनां न्यवारयत् ।

Harshacharīta 1,p.18

Even Brahmā in his exhortation against his anger addresses Durvāsā without the least trace of anger, only pointing out that his course of action was not right. O reverend Brāhmaṇa: The path you have trod is not the one followed by the meritorious. It only destroys:

ब्रह्मन् ! न खलु साधुसेवितोऽयं पन्था: येनासि प्रवृत्त: विहन्त्येष: ।

Harshacharīta 1, p. 19.

The fruit of this and the truth of the statement of the sage is clearly seen in the song of dawn by the goose-herd of the warbing swans of Brahmā's chariot, Oh noblest sweet swan! ever fondled in your dwelling of immaculate Mānasa lake (immaculate mind) longingly twinkling your eyes, descend for a while into yonder tank below, soon again you would be back in the abode of lotuses. As she listened to this Sarasvatī felt that it seemed to be a reminder to her. Well, I should respect the sage's utterance. So she got up, deciding on descending to the earth, abandoning her sorrowing companions around her, thrice ambulated clockwise four-faced Brahmā and somehow coaxingly prevailing on the assemblage of holy ones determined to follow her to return, she proceeded in the company of Sāvitrī from the world of Brahmā:

अपरेद्युरुदिते भगवित त्रिभुवनशेखरे.....विरोचने विरोचमाने नातिदूरवर्ती पितामहिवमानहंसकुलपालकः पर्यटन्नपरवक्त्रमुच्चैरगायत् तरलयिस दृशं किमुत्सुकामकलुषमानसवासलालिते। अवतर कलहंसि वापिकां पुनरिप यास्यसि पङ्कजालयम्।। तच्छु त्वा सरस्वत्यप्यचिन्तयत् । अहमिवानेन पर्यनुयुक्ता । भवतु मानयामि मुनेर्वचनित्युत्थाय कृतक्षितितलावतरणसङ्करुपा परित्यज्य वियोगविवलंव परिजनं ज्ञातिवर्गमपगणय्य त्रिः प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य चतुर्मखं कथमप्यनुनयनि-वर्तितानुयायिव्रतिव्राता ब्रह्मलोकतः सावित्रीद्वितीया निर्जगाम ।

Harshacharita 1, p. 28.

Even in the case of the highest celestials themselves, the words of *rishis* have to come true. It is no wonder that Rāma's departure from Ayodhyā renouncing an empire, in Kālidāsa's mode of description ever so poetic and thrilling, was to save his father from deviation from truth and consequent fall into abyssmal depths of hell. Rāma with Sītā and Lakshmaṇa as his companions entered the Daṇḍaka forest; at the same time he also entered individually the affectionate hearts of all the saintly sages in the forest:

स सीतालक्ष्मणसखः सत्याद्गुरुमलोपयन्। विवेश दण्कारण्यं प्रत्येकं च सतां मनः।।

Raghuvamśa 12,9.

Even Dasaratha who knew he was dying by his separation from Rāma, would not stop him, as truth was higher than even his life. Dasaratha rated high the attainment of purity by sticking to truth even if it cost his life.

शरीरत्यागमात्रेण शुद्धिलाभममन्यत ।

Raghuvamśa 12,10.

In another context, Rāma tells Sītā that he would if necessary rather give up his own life, even Sītā herself, dearer to him than his life, and even Lakshmana, but never fail to keep a word given by him:

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते मलक्ष्मणाम् । न तु वाक्यं प्रतिश्रुत्य ब्राह्मणानां विशेषतः ॥

Rāmāyana 3,10,19.

As already observed, if a *rishi* so chose to act, he could curse any. Even Sarasvatī, the consort of Brahmā himself, could not escape the curse of Durvāsā. Even the sweet and soft-spoken Priyamvada, the son of Priyadarśana, the Gandharva emperor, was born an elephant by the curse of the sage Matanga, as he could not suffer the pride and vanity of the youth:

मतङ्गशापादवलेपमूलादवाप्तवानस्मि मतङ्गजत्वम् । अवेहि गन्धर्वपतेस्तनूजं प्रियंवदं मां प्रियदर्शनस्य ॥

Raghuvamśa 5,53.

The commentator Chāritravardha explains it further by saying how it was the almost insulting attitude towards the worship of Siva that roused the anger of the normally patient sage Matanga:

पुरा किलेश्वरसेवागमनेऽखर्वगर्वसंतापितेन जातमन्युना गजो भवेति शप्त: इति वार्ता।

We have another classical instance of similar anger on the part of Durvāsā, even normally irascible and described as requiring no great provocation, being proverbially angry:

एष हि दुर्वासाः सुलभकोपो महर्षिः.....तथा कोऽन्यो हुतवहाद्ग्धुं प्रभविष्यति ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4

Who else except the fire could so burn. This is the remark of Priyamvadā to Anusūyā when asked by her to fall at his feet and coax him to relax the curse somehow. The reply comes immediately Oh my friend! By nature so very crooked, how would he accept anybody's coaxing. However, I have succeeded in slightly pacifying him. It is this Durvāsā according to the episode in the Vishnupurāna that brought down Indra from his great glory by a curse (Fig 49). Again because of the extreme pride of the lord of gods, who, without accepting with the highest devotion as nirmalya a garland of Santanaka flowers of rich perfume, presented to sage Durvāsā by a celestial nymph and worn on his locks, which he graciously in turn presented him, placed it on the temples of the elephant Airavata, which pulled it down with its trunk and trampled under foot. This so roused the rage of Durvāsā that he cursed him to lose the glory of his position which made him so vain, proud and disrespectful towards the highest blessing of grace offered him by no other than the son of sage Atri himself. Durvāsā, a part as it were of Siva's glory born on earth, was once moving about when he saw a lovely garland highly perfumed with the aroma of Santana flowers in the hand of a nymph (Vidyadharī) which so pleased him that he asked for it, appearing mad as was always his wont. She bowed to him and gladly gave it. Again like one deranged, he wound it around his jatās and continued his tramp when he sighted the lord of the celestials approaching him seated on his stately elephant Airāvata. Like one almost out of his mind, he took the garland swarmed by bees mad after its perfume out of his jaṭās and threw it at Indra. Indra received and placed it on the temples of Airāvata, and it looked beautiful like the stream of Gaṅgā on the peak of the Himālaya mountain. Attracted by the fragrance, the elephant pulled it with his trunk, smelt, threw it on the ground and trampled it. This roused the ire of the great sage Durvāsā. Oh Indra! wicked and vain in your prosperity, you have become indiscriminate. I had given you a celestial garland, the very abode of Lakshmī herself, as an act of grace and affection towards you. Instead of receiving it with reverence as an offering of grace, and without placing it on your crown with your eyes sparkling with joy, you have insulted this gift of mine. In consequence you will ere long lose your empire over the three worlds:

द्वीसाः शङ्करस्यांशः चचार पृथिवीमिमाम्। स ददर्श स्त्रजं दिव्यां ऋषिविद्याघरीकरे।। सांतानिकानामखिलं यस्य गन्धेन वासितम ।..... तां यथाचे वरारोहां विद्याधरवधुं ततः॥ यचिता तेन तन्वङ्गी मालां विद्याघराङ्गना। ददी तस्मै विशालाक्षी सादरं प्रणिपत्य तम् ॥ तामादायात्मनो मूच्नि स्नजमूनमत्तरूपध्क। कृत्वा स विप्रो मैत्रेय परिवभ्राम मेदिनीम् ॥ ददर्श समायान्तमूनमत्तरावतस्थितम् । त्रैलोक्याधिपति देवं सह देवै: शचीपतिम ॥ तामात्मन: स शिरसः स्रजमूनमत्तपटपदम् । आदायामरराजाय चिक्षेपोन्मत्तवन्मृनिः ॥ गहीत्वामरराजेन स्रगैरावतमूर्धनि । न्यस्ता रराज कैलासशिखरे जाह्नवी यथा॥ मदान्धकारिताक्षोऽसौ गन्धाकृष्टेन करेणाद्याय चिक्षेप तां स्रजं घरणीतले।। तत्रश्च कोघ भगवान दुर्वासा मूनिसत्तमः। देवराजं तु ऋद्धातद्वाच ऐश्वयं मदद् ष्टात्मन्नतिस्तब्घोऽसि श्रियो धाम स्नजं यस्त्वं महत्तां नाभिनन्दसि ॥ प्रसाद इति नोक्तं ते प्राणिपातपूर:सरम्। हर्षोत्फुल्लकपोलेन न चापि शिरसा घता।।

मया दत्तामिमां मालां यस्मान्न वहु मन्यसे। त्रैलोक्यश्रीरतो मूढ विनाशमूपयास्यति।।

Vishņupurāņa 1,9,2-14.

It is not necessary to reiterate that the utterance of Durvāsā proved only too true.

It is again the word of the Vālakhilyas, a host of great rishis, no larger than the size of the thumb each, but endowed with the highest spiritual power by their penance, that again almost deprived Indra of his high state though fortunately saved by Kasyapa. The Valakhilvas were helping Kaśyapa with material for the performance of a sacrifice. While Indra was bringing material in large quantity, a huge load of Samī and Audumbara twigs and Palāśa leaves in a bundle on his head and similarly other rishis whatever they could, the poor tiny sages only a thumb high, weak and emaciated because of austerities, could hardly carry by a supreme effort, one or two leaves of Palāśa. This so excited Indra's ego that he could scarcely control his laughter which roused the anger of the Valakhilyas and invited their curse. Garuda, on the other hand, who was mighty beyond description, feeling hungry as he was proceeding in his quest for amrita and instructed by his father Kasyapa, satisfied his hunger by eating up a tortoise and an elephant from a huge lake, two wicked brothers Vibhāvasu and Supratīka so transformed and ever in fued undaunted by their dimensions, as he carried them lightly in his claws; but in the act when the branch of the huge tree on which he tried to rest broke, he would not rest before he safely deposited the tiny-sized Vālakhilyas performing penance hanging from the very branch of the large tree that broke as he settled on it. Noticing the sages, the very abode of lustre and penance, and out of deference for them, Garuda rushed to his father to request him to beg of them slowly to descend from the bough as he carefully held it in his beak, the tortoise and elephant still in his claws, exciting the wonder and admiration of the Vālakhilyas. Kaśyapa did this and they came down, admiring the bird and, along with Kasyapa, blessed him in his errand to bring amrita. The Valakhilyas were so amazed at the immense strength of the bird that could carry the monstrous tortoise and elephant in his

claws and the huge bough in his beak that they appropriately named him the flyer with giant weight:

> गुरुं भारं समासाद्योड्डीन एप विहङ्कमः। गरुडस्तु खगश्रेष्ठस्तस्मात्पन्नगभोजनः।।

> > Mahābhārata 1,30,7.

The laughter of Indra in derison so enraged the Valakhilyas that they decided to pronounce the birth of an Indra a hundredfold mightier to be born of Kasyapa by that very sacrifice in which they participated. This made Indra get frightened as his position was in jeopardy. Once the Valakhilyas had pronounced that a mighty Indra would be born he could do nothing to avert it. He sought refuge of Kasyapa who had to come to his rescue by requesting the Valakhilyas to save Indra by creating an Indra no doubt as they had said but pronouncing Garuda yet to be born by the efficacy of the sacrifice created Indra among birds, the lord of birds. That is how he is Patagendra or Khagendra, whom neither Indra or the other Dikpālas could withstand as he engaged them in fight on his mission to get amrita (Fig. 50). Poor Indra was saved utter discomfiture by almost losing his lordship over the celestials. It would probably have been Garuda become Indra by the power of the truth in the utterance of the Valakhilyas, the tiny great rishis. The supercilious laughter of Indra and the truth of the utterance of the Valakhiliyas had such tremendous effect:

अथापश्यदृषीन् ह्रस्वानङ्गुष्ठोदरवर्ष्मणः ।
पलाशवितकामेकां वहतः संहतान् पिथ ॥
प्रलीनान्स्वेष्विवाङ्गेषु निराहारान्स्तपोघनान् ।
क्लिश्यमानान् मन्दवलान् गोष्पदे संप्लुतोदके ॥
तान् सर्वान्विस्मयाविष्टो वीर्योन्मत्तः पुरन्दरः ।
अवहस्याभ्यगाच्छीघ्रं लङ्ग्वियत्वावमन्य च ॥
तेऽथ रोषसमाविष्टाः सुभृशं जातमन्यवः ।
इन्द्रोऽन्यः सर्वदेवानां भवेदिति यतव्रताः ।
तपसो नः फलेनाद्य दारुणः सम्भवत्विति ॥
तद्वृध्वा भृशसंतप्तो देवराजः शतकतुः ।
जगाम शरणं तत्र कश्यपं शंसितव्रतम् ॥
तान् कश्यप जवाचेदं सान्त्वपूर्व प्रजापितः ।
अयमिन्द्रस्त्रभुवने नियोगाद्वह्मणः कृतः ॥

इन्द्रार्थे च भवन्तोऽपि यत्नवन्तस्तपोधनाः।
न मिथ्या ब्रह्मणो वाक्यं कर्तुं मर्ह्य सत्तमाः।।.....
भवत्वेष पतत्रीणामिन्द्रोऽतिबलसत्त्ववान्।
प्रसादः क्रियतामस्य देवराजस्य याचतः।।.....
तथा चैवं विधत्स्वात्र यथा श्रेयोऽनुपश्यसि।।

Mahābhārata 1,31,8-20,23.

Here again, it is the truth of the Vālakhilyas that triumphed, but to save Indra there was a slight modification suggested by Kaśyapa.

When Arjuna had gone to Dwaraka, after the great calamity that occurred there, and tried to bring back the Yadava women and the last progeny to represent the Yadava line safely over to Hastinapura, after the passing away of Krishna, Balarama, Vasudeva and the rest of the Yādavas, he no doubt went with great sorrow but he never felt that he would be thwarted in his attempt; and when he had suffered tremendous defeat at the hands of the Abhīras who carried away the entire harem of the Yadavas, including the women of Krishna himself, except the ashtapatnis or the eight wives that had ended themselves soon after Krishna, strangely enough he could not even lift the Gandiva bow and use it and had become so thoroughly demoralised, that it was only with great difficulty he could reach Mathura and coronate Vajra, the only surviving heir of the Yadavas as king. Here he met Vyāsa again who, understanding his difficulty, comforted him giving him the reason for his defeat and advising him not to get disheartened, as fate determined everything, and advised him that as his life of utility on earth had ended along with that of his brothers, he was to go to the penance grove for performing penance and seeking final bliss. He hastened him to do it within the next few days.

The reason for the defeat given by Vyāsa is wonderful. Ashṭā-vakra, the great sage who was brilliant even as a little boy, was immersed in water when he saw nymphs in the sky bowing to him, and pleased, he granted them boons. Some of them were satisfied with his very look of grace and told him so, while so many others begged of him that they should have Purushottama as their husband. At once Ashṭāvakra assured them that they would have their wish fulfilled. Because of the potency of his penance, his blessing was ful-

filled later. After granting them the boon, when Ashṭāvakra came out of the water, looking at his deformity — probably this was before he went to see Janaka and met his father, who made him whole again — they were so amazed at his ugly form that they giggled with laughter. Enraged, the young sage, cursed them that while they would become consorts of Purushottama, they would become captives of the lowest barbarous ones on earth. That is why the Abhīras could triumph and carry away the entire female folk of the Yādavas, including so many of those who had become consorts of Kṛishṇa, who was no other than Purushottama himself, Arjuna rendered helpless, unable to lift even his Gāṇḍīva bow:

ततोर्ज्नः प्रेतकार्यं कृत्वा तेषां यथाविधि । निश्चकाम जनं सर्वं गृहीत्वा वज्रमेव च।। द्वारवत्या विनिष्कान्ताः कृष्णपत्न्यः सहस्रशः ।..... यस्मिन्दिने हरियातो दिवं संत्यज्य मेदिनीम । तस्मिन्ने वावतीर्णीयं कालकायो वली कलि: ॥ प्लावयामास तां शन्यां द्वारकां च महौदधिः।..... दृष्टाः स्त्रियो नीयमाना दस्यूनां निहतेश्वराः ॥..... आभीरा मन्त्रयामासुः समेत्यात्यन्तदुर्मदाः ॥ अयमेकोऽर्जुनो घन्वी स्त्रीजनं निहतेश्वरम्। नयत्यस्मानतिकम्य घिगेतद्भवतां ततोऽज्नो धनुर्दिव्यं गाण्डीवमजरं युधि। आरोपयितुमारेभे न शशाक च वीर्यवान् ॥..... मिषतः पाण्डपूत्रस्य ततस्ताः प्रमदोत्तमाः। आभीरैरपकृष्यन्त कामाच्चान्या: प्रवत्रजु: ॥..... ततः सुदृःखितो जिष्णः कष्टं कष्टमिति ब्रवन । अहो भगवतानेन मुक्तोस्मीति रुरोद वै।।..... इत्थं वदन् ययौ जिष्ण में यूराख्यां पूरोत्तमाम । चकार तत्र राजानं वक्तं यादवनन्दनम्।। स ददशं ततो व्यासं फल्गुनः काननाश्रयम् । तम्पेत्य महाभागं विनयेनाभ्यवादयत् ॥..... भीष्मद्रोणाङ्कराजाद्यास्तथा दुर्योधनादयः। यत्प्रभावेण निर्देग्धाः स कृष्णस्त्यक्तवान् भूवम् ॥ नियौंवनहतश्रीका भ्रष्टच्छायेव मे मही। विभाति तात नैकोऽहं विरहे तस्य चिक्रणः ॥..... आनीयमानमाभीरै: कृष्ण कृष्णावरोधनम्। हतं यष्टिप्रहरणैः परिभय वलं मम ॥.....

अलं ते ब्रीडया पार्थं न त्वं शोचित्मईसि । कालस्य गतिरीदशी॥ अवेहि सर्वभृतेषु कालो भवाय भतानामभवाय च पाण्डव। कालमुलिमदं ज्ञात्वा भव स्थैर्यघनोऽर्जन।।..... गृहीता दस्यूभिर्यंच्च भवत: शोचिताः स्त्रियः। तदप्यहं यथावत्तं कथयामि तवार्जुन।..... अष्टावकः पूरा विप्र उदवासपरोऽभवत । वहन वर्षगणान् पार्थं गृह्णन्त्रह्म सनातनम् ॥ जितेष्वसू रसंघेषु मेरुपृष्ठे महोत्सवः । बभुव तत्र गच्छन्त्यो ददशुस्तं सुरस्त्रियः ।।..... तुष्ट्वस्तं महात्मानं प्रशशंसुश्च पाण्डव। आकण्ठमग्नं सलिले जटाभारघरं मूनिम ॥ विनयावनतार्श्वनं प्रशोमुः स्तोत्रतत्पराः ।..... प्रसन्नोऽहं महाभागा भवतीनां यदिष्यते। मत्तस्तद्धियतां सर्वं प्रदास्याम्चपि दुर्लभम् ॥ रम्भातिलोत्तमाद्या वै दिक्चोप्सरसोऽब्रवन । प्रसन्ने त्वय्यसंप्राप्तं किमस्माकिमति द्विज ॥ इतरास्त्वब्रवन विप्र प्रसन्नो भगवान यदि। तदिच्छामः पति प्राप्तं विप्रेन्द्र पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥ एवं भविष्यतीत्युक्त्वा उत्ततार जलान्मुनिः। तम्त्तीराँ चं ददश्विरूपं वक्रमष्टघा ॥ तं दृष्ट्वा गृहमानानां यासां हासः स्फुटोऽभवत् । ताः शशप मृनि: कोपमवाप्य कुरुनन्दन ॥ यस्माद्विरूपरूपं मां मत्वा हासावमानना। भवतीभि: कृता तस्मादेष शापं ददाभ्यहम् ॥ मत्प्रसादेन भर्तारं लब्ध्वा तु पुरुषोत्तमम्। मच्छापोपहताः सर्वा दस्युहस्तं गमिष्यय ॥.... एवं तस्य मूनेः शापादष्टावकस्य केशवम्। भर्तारं प्राप्य ता याता दस्युहस्तं सुराङ्गनाः ॥ तत्त्वया नात्र कर्तव्यः शोकोऽल्पोपि हि पाण्डव। तेनैवाखिलनाथेन सर्वं तद्पसंहतम् ॥

Vishņupurāņa 5,38,5-85

The truth of the utterance is so great that if uttered by one dedicated to satya and tapas it has to happen whatever it is. Sage Maitreya, the pupil of Parāśara, whom even Vyāsa regarded with veneration, approached Dhritarāshṭra at Hastināpura, touched by the miserable condition in which he found the Pāṇḍavas, dressed in bark

garments in the forest Kāmyaka, and all by the wickedness of Duryodhana to which Dhritrāshtra was also nearly agreeable, to counsel him in proper behaviour. Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana were together and received him with reverence. He reminded them of the most recent event of Kimmīra a formidable giant crushed by Bhīma and made to go to another world like Baka and Hidimba earlier. He advised them to be amiable and affectionate and not hazard total annihilation of their race on the battlefield. As he was so pronouncing only for their good, Duryodhana with over-weaning pride, with his ears and eyes turned away from his wise counsel, rubbed the floor with his foot and clapped his thigh in disdain. This so angered the saintly Maitreya, by nature so sweet, that he disgorged on him a great flame of fire of a formidable curse assuring him that the antidote to his wicked pride would be on the battlefield where the elephants with their temples shattered and warriors killed would have the finale in the fearful breaking of Duryodhana's thigh by Bhīma himself:

अथापश्यत मैत्रेयः कृशानुसदृशो मुनिः।.....
सपुत्रं कौरवपित सभासीनं समभ्यघात्।।
राजन्नविनयो घोरः कि त्वयायमुपेक्षितः।
कुलाचारं समुत्सृष्य वर्तसे कैतवेन यत्।।.....
हिडिम्बवकिम्मीरहन्ता भीमोऽपि दुःसहः।
दृष्टा मया बल्किलिनः पाण्डवाः काम्यके वने।।.....
इति बुवाणं मैत्रेयं दर्पादनवलोकयन्।
क्ष्मां पदेन लिखन्नू रुं जघान कुरुनन्दनः।।
अनयं तं मुनिर्दृष्टवा कोपात्कालानलप्रभः।
नायमस्तीति सींचत्य शशाप घृतराष्ट्रजम्।।
अस्य दुर्नयगदस्य भेषजं कुम्भिनन्नघटभाजि संयुगे।
ऊरुभञ्जनविधौ भयङ्करो भीम एव भवतो भविष्यति।।
इत्युद्धान्तमहाशापपावकं कुपितं मुनिम्।
भीतः प्रसादयामास पुत्रस्नेहात्कुरूद्वहः।।

Bhāratamañjarī 3,83-85,89,91-94.

Gāndhārī's pātivratya was so potent as the highest tapasyā of a maharshi, that, with the full knowledge of Krishna as Paramātmā himself, as even Dhritarāshtra, Vyāsa, Bhīshma and others knew, and though so very objective as to lament for Abhimanyu's death as much as Subhadrā herself, and would not bless her own son Duryodhana with victory even at his earnest request, if he did not follow the path

of virtue, as she categorically pronounced that the victory was only for the side that adhered to righteousness, यतो घमंस्ततो जयः Mahābhārata, yet being a woman and a mother, overwhelmed by grief by the annihilation of all her sons and an only son-in-law, she pronounced that, as being most capable of averting this calamity, Krishna had deliberately been indifferent to it with all his omniscience, either because of the necessity of total destruction or hatred or as a divine sport, his own entire family would perish in twentyfive years thence. Krishna smilingly welcomed it as inevitable, already assured by Kausika and other sages, which was only now reiterated by her truthful utterance:

शक्तेनापि त्त्वया कृष्ण यस्मात्कामादुपेक्षितः । सर्वक्षयाद्वा द्वेषाद्वा सर्वज्ञेन च लीलया ।। षड्विशे वत्सरे प्राप्ते वृष्णीनां समरे मिथः । तस्मात्तवापि भिवता विपुलो बान्धवक्षयः ।।..... इत्युक्तवा तारकरुणं रुरोद सुबलात्मजा ।। तामुवाच हसन् कृष्णः स्वेच्छासृष्टलयोदयः । विधिनैतत्प्रगदिष्टं पूनरुक्तं तवोदितम् ।।

Bharatamañjarī 12,74-77

That the iron pestle with which the Vrishnis tried to fool the lustrous sages like Kausika and others come to see Krishna at Dwārakā, by dressing up Sāmba as a pregnant girl, would end them as the sages pronounced could not be belied by even the supreme effort in reducing it into powder, even the dust luxuriantly growing into long reeds and stalks to help them to mutually kill themselves in drunken revelry:

तान्दृष्ट्वा कौशिकमुखान् प्रहर्षान्मदिवप्लुताः ।
साम्बं कृत्वा वधूवेषं पप्रच्छुर्वृष्णिपुंगवाः ।।
अपि पुत्रः सुता वास्या भविष्यति मुनीश्वराः ।
तच्छु्त्वा तेऽवदन्नस्याः कुलमृत्युर्भविष्यति ॥
मुसलं ब्रह्मदण्डास्यमित्युक्त्वादर्शनं ययुः ।
लौहं साम्बस्ततोऽसूत मुसलं वज्जसंहतम् ॥
तदाह्वको भयात्पिष्ट्वा तूर्णं तत्याज सागरे ।.....
प्राक् तस्माद्वज्जमुसलात्प्रजातैर्वत्लरीचयैः ॥
तृणमप्यभवत्तत्र ब्रह्मदण्डमदोत्कटम् ॥

क्षयाय मुसलीभूतं सहसान्धकवृष्णिषु।

याभूदापानभूस्तेषां ललनानयनोत्सवः।।

सैव मृत्योरभूद्धोरसंहाराहारमण्डपः।

साम्बे गते चारुदोष्णि प्रद्युम्ने कृतवर्मणि।।

अनिरुद्धे च शंनेये निहते पश्यतो हरेः।

वृत्ते वृष्णिक्षये घोरे स्त्रीशेषा यादवे कुले।।

हारका प्ररोदेव छिन्नहराश्रुनिर्भरैः।

Bhāratamañjarī 16,3-6,18-22.

The other preference of Taponitya, like Rāthītara for satya, was tapas. Penance was everything for him. This is also true because even to understand the Brahman, the Supreme One, Brighu, the son of Varuna is asked by Varuna to understand the Brahman only by penance:

तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्य । तपो ब्रह्मेति ।

And in various ways, as the Taittirīya puts it, he learnt first that anna was Brahma, as everything is born from anna, subsists on anna and goes back into anna. But not yet convinced he again goes to Varuṇa and Varuṇa repeats his guidance to help him to learn it by penance. He then understands that prāṇa is Brahma and again performs penance, this time to understand that manas is Brahma. The next time he understands through penance that vijnāna is Brahma and finally be concludes that the Supreme One is ānanda or bliss.

आनन्दो ब्रह्मे ति व्यजानात् । आनन्दाद्वचे व खिल्वमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

Tattiriya Upanishad 3,1-6

This is the highest knowledge obtained from Varuna.

सैषा भागंबी वारुणी विद्या।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,6.

This ānanda or bliss is elaborated in the second chapter of the Taittirīya in Brahmānandavallī. It starts from the smallest unit and proceeds up to brahmānanda itself, The ānanda of the Eternal One. The ideal of joy, alertness and confidence in accomplishing is the greatest in the ideal master of the universe, Dakshināmurti Siva, the

young teacher instructing the oldest and the most venerable of sages: vriddhās śishyā gurur yuvā — the ideal. This is the measure of human joy, mānusha ānanda a careful assessment infinitesimal fraction of the Supreme joy. The instance of earth is the one in the prime of youth, noble by disposition, intelligent and well read, up and alert, excellent in health and with physical stamina. For him the entire world is ladan with treasures, waiting to be accepted by him. This is the first unit in the measure of human joy:

सैषाऽनन्दस्य मीमांसा भवति । युवा स्थात्साधुयुवाऽघ्यापकः । आशिष्ठो द्रढिष्ठो वलिष्ठः । तस्येयं पृथिवी सर्वा वित्तस्य पूर्णा स्यात् । स एको मानुष आनन्दः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 2,8.

A hundred such make the bliss of manushya gandharva. The śrotriya i.e one born in a good Brāhmana family, knowledgeable in the highest brahmavidvā after due samskara upanavāna, when free from all desires. has all this bliss and more. A hundredfold bliss of manusha gandharva is one devagandharva bliss. The śrotriya has more of it. A hundredfold of the pitris of the eternal world (chiraloka), is again vouchsafed in greater proportion to the the śrotriya. A hundredfold of bliss of the pitris is one unit of the ajānajāna devas and this again is there for the śrotriya devoid of desires. A hundredfold again of this bliss is one of a karmadeva. The strotriya equally has it. A hundredfold of this again is of the highest celestials of celestials, devas. A hundred of this is the bliss of Indra, as well as of the desireless śrotriya. A hundred anandas of Indra make up a unit of the bliss of Brihaspati and a hundred of this of Prajapati. A hundredfold bliss of Prajapati's ananda makes up the ananda of the supreme Brahman. This again is there for the śrotriya devoid of desires. It is ultimately the realisation of the great reality that the individual soul here is the same in the solar orb representing the Almighty, the monistic conception of the Highest, omnipresent and omniscient:

> ते ये शतं प्रजापतेरानन्दाः । स एको ब्रह्मण आनन्दः । श्रोत्रियस्य चाका-महतस्य । स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः । स य एवंवित् । अस्माल्लोकात्प्रेत्य......एतमानन्दमयमात्मानमुपसंकामति ।

> > Taittirīya Upanishad 2,8.

One who has realised the highest by penance reaches the sphere of ananda.

There was nothing that was impossible to be done by tapasyā. Sitā herself threatens Rāvaṇa when he rails before her that she could reduce him to ashes by the power of her penance and the force of her truth but was abstaining because she had not a word from Rāma to use that penance:

असन्देशात्तु रामस्य तपसञ्चानुपालनात्। न त्वां कुर्भि दशग्रीव भस्म भस्मर्हे तेजसा।।

The same is repeated by Hanuman in another way when he is frightened whether he had burnt Sītā also in the flames of Lanka when he set the city on fire. He however feels reassured that by her worship of truth, by her great penance and single-minded devotion towards her lord Rāma, indeed she could burn even fire but surely fire could not injure her (Fig. 51):

तपसा सत्यवाक्चेन अनन्यत्वाच्च भर्तरि। अपि सा निर्दहेदग्निन तामाग्निः प्रधक्ष्यति॥

We have in the Aranyakānda the classical instance of rishis coming to Rāma seeking protection from the Rākshasas (Fig. 52). It is not that they were incapable of ending them by their curse empowered by the force of their penance. But when there was help readily available from the righteous king expected to protect them, they would conserve their power of penance and not waste it on trivial things. It is also known that the dhārmik king by protecting properly the saintly ones automatically received a fourth part of the merit of their penance. The sages themselves tell Rāma this truth, request him to see the hundreds of their corpses and skeletons, remains of the devastation of the cruel Rākshasas, and beg of him to help them:

यत्करोति परं धर्मं मुनिर्मूलफलाशनः।
तत्र राज्ञश्चतुर्भागः प्रजा धर्मेण रक्षतः।।.....
सोऽयं ब्राह्मणभूयिष्ठो वानप्रस्थगणो महान्।
त्वन्नाथोऽनाथवद्राम राक्षसैर्वध्यते भृशम्।।
एहि पश्य शारीराणि मुनीनां भवितात्मनाम्।
हतानां राक्षसैर्घोरैबंहनां बहुधा वने।।

Rāmāyana 3,6,14-16.

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1 100

When the *rishis* from the banks of Yamunā came to pray of Rāma to rid them of the depredations of the cruel demon Lavaņa whose strength was enhanced by the trident that made him formidable, Kālidāsa makes it clear that though their sacrifices were destroyed by the Rākshasas, the embodiment of darkness and ignorance, they sought protection only of Rāma who was the sun of refuge. Indeed when Rāma was there they would not use the power of their penance to end the demon. It is only when there was no other protector available that they would draw on the resources of their penance which was itself mightier than the mightiest weapons in the form of their curse:

लवरोन विलुत्तेज्यास्तामिस्रोण तमभ्ययुः।
मुनयो यमुनाभाजः शरण्यं शरणार्थिनः।।
अवेक्ष्य रामं ते तस्मिन्न प्रजह्नुः स्वतेजसा।
त्राणाभावे हि शापस्त्राः कुर्वन्ति तपसो व्ययम्।।

Raghuvamśa 15,2-3.

In fact Raghu himself as king and protector is described as asking Kautsa the disciple of sage Varatantu whether his three-fold penance by emaciating his body by fasts, strict silence and complete control of the mind, of such potency as to quail the heart of even Indra, is not frittered away by obstacles calling for its use:

कायेन वाचा मनसापि शश्वद्यत्संभृतं वासवधैर्यं लोपि । आपद्यते न व्ययमन्तरायैः कच्चिन्महर्षे स्त्रिविधं तपस्तत् ॥

Raghuvamśa 5.5

But as occasion required the sages could spend their tapasyā on worthy projects. Vālmīki welcome Śatrughna and entertains him in royal fashion as he was on his way to destroy the demon Lavana. This was by his power of penance:

तमृषिः पूजयामास कुमारं क्लान्तवाहनम् । तपःप्रभावसिद्धाभिविशेषप्रतिपत्तिभिः॥

Raghuvamśa 15,12.

To avoid another such expenditure of hard earned penance of the sage, Satrughna avoided a halt at Vālmīki's hermitage on his way to Ayodhyā though it would have given him great joy to listen to the sweet song of the Rāmāyaṇa by the sons of Rāma that thrilled even the deer in the hermitage:

Raghuvamśa 15,37.

The classical instance of this kind of expenditure of tapasvā on the most lavish scale is Bharadvāja's hospitality to Bharata on his way to Chitrakūta to meet Rāma. Bharadvāja specially invited the prince to partake of his hospitality. Bharata, who had stationed his army far away from the penance grove to avoid any desecration of the holy atmosphere of the hermitages, trees, streams, all that was so sacred there, answered that he was already so lovingly welcomed as a guest arrived and there was nothing more to be done. But Bharadvaia smiled as he remarked that though he would be pleased with the simplest hermit's fare, it was the army that followed him that he desired to entertain properly and asked him to invite them all. By the power of his penance the sage called on Viśvakarma, lokapalas like Indra, Varuna, and Kubera, Soma, rivers, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Tumburu and others to make available water, cool, sweet like sugarcane juice, varieties of wine, trees yielding silken garments and golden iewels, ambrosial food in different forms to eat, munch, lick, suck, drink, listening to heavenly music and witnessing dance, enjoying cool breeze, showers of fragrant celestial flowers, mansions to sleep in and stables for the cavalry, elephantry and so forth:

> अथोवाच भरदाजो भरतं प्रहसन्त्रिव । जाने त्वां प्रीतिसंयुक्तं तृष्येस्त्वं येन केन चित ॥ सेनायास्त तवैतस्याः कर्तं मिच्छामि भोजनम । मम प्रीतिर्यथारुपा त्वमहों मनुजाधिप ॥..... अग्निशालां प्रविश्याथ पीत्वापः परिमृज्य च । आतिथ्यस्य कियाहेतोविश्वकर्माणमाह्नयत् ॥.... आह्नये लोकपालांस्त्रीन देवान शक्रमुखांस्तथा। आतिथ्यं कर्त् मिच्छामि तत्र मे संविधीयताम ॥ प्राक्स्रोतसञ्च या नद्यः प्रत्यक्स्रोतस एव च। शीतिमक्षकाण्डरसोपमम् ॥..... अपराश्चोदकं आह्नये देवगन्धर्वान् विश्वावमूहहाहहन्। देवीर्गन्धर्वीरचापि सर्वशः ।।..... तर्धवाप्सरसो सार्धमाह्नये सपरिच्छद: ॥ समस्तुम्ब्रुणा वनं कृष्प् यहिव्यं वासोभ्षणपात्रवत । शश्वत्तत्कौबेरिमहैत् च॥ दिव्यना रीफलं

इह मे भगवान् सोमो विधत्तांमन्नमृत्तमम् । भक्ष्यं भोज्यं च चौष्यं च लेह्यं च विविधं बहु ॥..... एवं समाधिना युक्तस्तेजसाप्रतिमेन च । शिक्षास्वरसमायुक्तं तपसा चान्नवीन्मुनि: ॥..... व्यस्मयन्त मनुष्यास्ते स्वप्नकल्पं तदद्भृतम् । दृष्ट्वातिथ्यं कृतं तादृग्भरतस्य महर्षिणा ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2,91,3-4,11-16,18-20,22,81,82.

Penance of this type was not so easily acquired. It had to be a very hard process in which one is completely oblivious of the self and surroundings, to this extent, that a whole anthill could spring up on the hermit performing penance, unware of all that is happening and completely lost in meditation (Fig. 53). Chyavana, son of Bhrighu, was in deep penance on the banks in the vicinity of a lake. He was so lost to the world that he had almost become a wooden post, yet full of lustre, and around him arose a huge anthill overgrown with a variety of creepers and, infested by swarms of ants, he appeared a clod of clay and nothing else with no human semblance. A long time passed when Saryāti the king of the realm companied by his women came near the lake to sport in this beautiful atmosphere of peace and calm. His only daughter of exquisite charm and beauty, decked in jewels that made her all the more bright and sprightly, wandered in the vicinity at will and was attracted by the anthill which she noticed with her companions. She gathered flowers and cut small boughs in bunches and blossoms. The rishi noticed her and from the inside of the anthill addressed her though she could not hear his voice. Looking into the anthill through the interstices she noticed the glow of his eyes which, however, she could not understand as human, and in a sense of curiosity she poked them. This angered the sage, the result of which became evident in the entire retinue of the king becoming helpless in the daily discharge of excretion. The king dismayed at such an occurrence, recollected the fact that the place was the abode of the most powerful and aged rishi Chyavana, enquired if anybody had offended him, and learning to the contrary, was in an ado as to what to do. The devoted daughter observing the sorrowful state of her parents explained how she had in the notion that they were glowworms in the anthill put out the eyes of the sage. The king immediately rushed to where Chyavana was performing penance and begged

forgiveness with his hands brought together in reverence. The pacified sage explained to the king that the princess in the vanity of her unassailable beauty, high state, and pride to an extent had hurt him, but he would forgive her, accepting her as his dutiful wife to look after him. The king without a second thought gave her to him in wedlock. Sukanyā also, accepting the aged seer as her consort attended on him with the utmost devotion, both the fires and the guests to their hermitage, and pleased the sage immensely. Once, when she rose after her bath from the lake in her glory like a celestial nymph, the Aśvins, amazed at her beauty, enquired of her whereabouts and learnt she was Sukanyā, daughter of Saryāti and wife of the sage Chyavana. How is it, you, lustrous like lightning, have been given to a husband, decrepit, so advanced in old age, who could neither protect you, nourish you, nor satisfy you as a husband. Do not waste your youth. Sukanyā retorted at once that her husband was divine in her eyes, and would not listen to their wicked talk, warning them not to repeat such words in future. Amazed at her constancy, they offered to make him a youth and requested her to choose one of them as her husband. She returned to Chyavana and narrated the whole episode. Chyavana agreed and reasured her that everything would go well. He entered the lake as directed and after a dip arose from it in celestial youthful glory. All the three looked alike. She meditated and prayed in her heart that she should be able to choose only her husband and succeeded. Chyavana also highly pleased with the Asvins, granted them a boon and, by the power of his penance, he got them a share in the soma offering in sacrifices to which so far they were not entitled. again the glory of penance:

भृगोर्महर्षेः पुत्रोऽभूच्च्यवनो नाम भारत।
समीपे सरसस्तस्य तपस्तेपे महाद्युतिः।।.....
स वल्मोकोऽभवदृषिर्लताभिरिव संवृतः।
कालेन महता राजन् समाकीर्णः पिपीलिकैः।।
तथा स संवृतो घीमान्मृत्पिण्ड इव सर्वेशः।....
अय दीर्घस्य कालस्य शर्यातिर्नाम पाथिवः।
आजगाम सरो रम्यं विहर्तुं मिदमुत्तमम्।।....
एकैव च सुता सुभूः सुकत्या नाम भारत।....
चंक्रभ्यमाना वल्मीकं भागवस्य समासदत्।....
स्पेन वयसा चैव मदनेन मदेन च।....

तत: सूकन्या वल्मीके दष्ट्वा भागवचक्षषी।..... कि नू खिलवदिमत्युक्तवा निर्विभेदास्य लोचने ॥ अक्रध्यत्स तया विद्धे नेत्रे परममन्यूमान्। ततः शर्यातिसैन्यस्य शकुन्मुत्रे समावणोत ॥..... पितरं दृःखितं दृष्ट्वा सूकन्येयमथाव्रवीत्। मयाटन्त्येह वल्मीके दुष्टं सत्त्वमभिज्वलत् ।। खद्योतवदभिज्ञातं तन्मया विद्धमन्तिकात्। एतच्छ त्वा त् वल्मीकं शर्यातिस्तूर्णमभ्ययात् ॥ तत्रापश्यत्तपोवृद्धं वयोवृद्धं च भागवम्।..... अज्ञानाद्वालया यत्ते कृतं तत् क्षन्तुमहंसि। ततोऽन्नवीन्महीषालं च्यवनो भागवस्तदा।। अपमानादहं विद्धो ह्यनया द पूर्णया।..... तामेव प्रतिगृह्याहं राजन् दुहितरं तव। क्षंस्यामीति महीपाल सत्यमेतद्ववीमि ते ।..... ददौ दुहितरं तस्मै च्यवनाय महात्मने।..... सकन्यापि पति लब्ध्वा तपस्विनमनिन्दिता । नित्यं पर्यचरत्त्रीत्या तपसा नियमेन च।। शुशूषुरनसूयिका । अग्रीनामतिथीनां च

Mahābhārata 3,122,1-29.

कस्य चित्वथ कालस्य त्रिदशाविश्वनौ नृप। कृताभिषेकां विवतां स्कन्यां तामपश्यताम्।। तां दृष्ट्वा दर्शनीयाङ्गां देवराजसुतामिव।..... इच्छाव भद्रे ज्ञातुं त्वां तत्त्वमाख्याहि शोभने ॥ ततः सुकन्या सवीडा तावुवाच सुरोत्तमौ। शर्यातितनयां वित्तं भार्यां मां च्यवनस्य च ॥..... कथं त्वमसि कल्याणि पित्रा दत्ता गताध्वने ।.... न देवेष्वपि तुल्यं हि त्वया पश्र्याव भाविनि ॥ परमाम्बरवर्जिता। अनाभरणसंपन्ना शोभयस्यधिकं भद्रे वनमप्यनलङ्कृता ॥..... त्वमुपास्से ह कल्याणि कामभोगबहिष्कृतम् ॥ असमर्थं परित्राणे पोषणे तु शुचिस्मिते। सा त्वं च्यवनमुत्सृज्य वरयस्वेकमावयो: ।।..... रताहं च्यवने पत्यी मैवं मां पर्यशङ्कृतम्। देवभिषग्वरौ।..... पुनस्त्वेनामावां युवानं रूपसंपन्नं करिष्यावः पति तव।। ततस्तस्यावयोश्चीव वृणीष्वान्यतमं पतिम्।

एतेन समयेनैनमामंत्रय पति तयोर्वचनाद्राजन्न पसंगम्य भागवम् ॥ सा उवाच वावयं यत्ताभ्यांमृक्तं भृगूस्तं प्रति । तच्छुत्वा च्यवनो भार्यामुवाच कियतामिति ।। श्रत्वा तदिवनो वाक्यं तस्यास्तित्कयतामिति । ऊचतु राजपंत्री तां पतिस्तव विशत्वपः॥ ततोऽम्भश्चवनः शीघ्रं रूपार्थी प्रविवेश ह। अश्विनाविप तौ राजन् सरः प्रविशतां तदा ॥ ततो मृहर्ताद्त्तीर्णाः सर्वे ते सरसस्तदा। दिव्यरूपघराः सर्वे युवानो मृष्टकृण्डलाः ॥ प्रीतिवर्धनाः । तुल्यवेषघराश्चे व मनस: तेऽब्रवन् सहिताः सर्वे वृणीष्वान्यतमं शुभे ॥ अस्माकमीप्सितं भद्रे पतित्वे वरवर्णिनि ।..... सा समीक्ष्य तू तानु सर्वास्त्रल्यरूपधरानु स्थितान् ।। निश्चित्य मनसा बृद्धचा देवी वब्ने स्वकं पतिम । लब्ध्वा तू च्यवनो भार्या वयो रूपं च वांछितम ॥ हृष्टोऽब्रवीन्महातेजास्तौ नासत्याविदं वचः। यथाहं रूपसंपन्नो वयसा च समन्वितः।। कृतो भवद्भचां वृद्ध: सन् भार्यां च प्राप्तवानिमाम् । तस्माद्य वां करिष्यामि प्रीत्याहं सोमपीथिनौ । मिषतो देवराजस्य सत्यमेतद्ववीमि वाम्।।

Māhābhārata 2,123. 1-24.

From this it is clear that penance had to be the highest austerity, and this austerity is to an extent seen in the emaciated form of the sages in sculpture (Fig. 54) and their attitude, स्थिरसुखमासनम् Yogasūtra, which defines the position or stance of the sage in meditation. That a whole anthill grew over a sage without his knowledge of it, is not a mere attitude of meditation, but is something of a length of time, the meditator completely oblivious of the surroundings, where the mind, undistracted, continues for ages in a samādhi which is fixed on the Supreme, brahmalagna. It is of this that the highest example is seen in the form of Śiva as Yogi (Fig. 55).

Janaka, even as a great Rājarishi, deeply sighs, seated under a tree, and feels that in spite of all the mortifications of the body that he had been practising, it would not fall, and still would continue in spite of the grief that he experienced for the sorrow of his innocent

daughter Sītā abandened by Rāma, which, even for him, a philosopher, who had no attachment for anything, still terribly turmoils his mind. It is no doubt true that Janaka himself belonged to the spiritual class *Brahmavādins* who sought realisation of the soul and about whom there are so many touching anecdotes regarding their pursuit of knowledge, truth, the meaning of life, the Absolute, the One highest Factor, the great seers, like Yājñavalkya, the great preceptor in the court of Janaka whose objective was the discriminative understanding of the Ātman:

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः ।

Though a great seer who had realised the Absolute even though a ruling king, the Rājarishi Janaka, endowed with the greatest wisdom, living in the world but free from its shackles, and capable of maintaining composure even if and whenever Mithilā was in flames:

अनन्तं बत मे वित्तं यस्य मे नास्ति किंचन। मिथिलायां प्रदीप्तायां न मे दह्याति किंचन।।

Mahābhārata 12,171,56.

had still a weak point in his sorrow for Sītā. Janaka cannot but recall in his mind his dear girl ever before his mind's eye as a little child with lotus face, now wreathed in a smile of innocence and now again in tears, revealing a few, just peeping, soft bud-like teeth, sweet in her prattle with the words faltering in a child's language scarcely understood:

अनियतरुदितस्मितं विराजत्कतिपयकोमलदन्तकुड्मलाग्रम् । बदनकमलकं शिशोः स्मरामि स्खलदसमञ्जसमञ्जु जल्पितं ते ।। Uttararāmacharita 4,4.

Janaka feels that his heart is terribly lacerated and in great pain by the great calamity that has befallen his beloved daughter, could never end, and being poignant, continually cuts through his vitals, like a sharp-toothed saw:

> अपत्ये यत्तादृग्दुरितमभवत्तेन महता विषक्तस्तीब्रेण व्रणितहृदयेन व्यथयता। पटुर्घारावाही नव इव चिरेणापि हि न मे निकृत्तन्मर्माणि ककच इव मन्युविरमित।।

Uttararāmacharita 4,3.

He really wonders how already tortured by grief in extreme old age, himself practising most difficult penance like parāka, sāntapana and others, does not fall down dead. It is only because the rishis hold that those who commit suicide fall into those dark worlds rid of sunlight, asūryā and andhatāmisrā, a very great sin indeed, that he refrains from it. The rigour of parāka is such that the fasting is continuously for twelve days with the senses and mind under control. Santapana, chandrayana, krichchhra and other penances are equally difficult but as a Rajarishi, somehow, he controls himself and, even though roused to anger towards Rāma for abandoning Sītā who was ever so innocent, he has no heart to harm him in the least by a curse. though Kausalyā fears and apprehends it. Even Vālmiki expresses his displeasure in this one unpardonable act as he considers it. Vālmīki feels that Rāma, even though the means of removing the sharp thorn of the three worlds, Ravana, though ever so true to his word and ever so humble, having been unnecessarily turbid in his attitude to Sita courted his anger though it would not spurt:

> उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेप्यविकत्थनेऽपि । त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्नजे मे ॥

> > Raghuvamśa 14,73.

Parašurāma after the sad demise of his father at the hands of a Kshatriya not only exterminated twentyone times the entire Kshatriya world but almost developed a nausea at the very sight of a Kshatriya. Even a saintly king Janaka and the best example of a Rājarishi, who was more a sage than a king appears almost as one to be avoided in the eyes of Paraśurāma. He cannot however help admiring Janaka, a king, of the highest discriminating intellect, protected in every way in dharma by his preceptor Śatānanda, son of Gautama and born of the Āngīrasa family, the sage Yājñavalkya, the great disciple of Sūrya himself expounding for him of the highest brahmavidyā:

स एप राजा जनको मनीषी पुरोहितेनाङ्गिरसेन गुप्तः । आदित्याशिष्यः किल याज्ञवल्क्या यस्मै मुनिर्ब्रह्म परं विवन्ने ।। Mahāvīracharita 2.43.

Paraśuiāma's haughty talk insulting even to the highest Brahmavādins and Brahmarishis like Vasishtha and Visvāmitra so angers Janaka that

though he had long given up the use of the bow, calls for it, so that he could use it if it came to it that Paraśurāma transcended his limits. The latter tauntingly addresses Janaka in that exasperated mood, and reminds him that, though his own valour was so great, he was still so respectful to him because of his exceptional great quality as the highest philosopher who had realised the Supreme. How could you talk so rudely without the least fear of the consequences, just because I am approaching you in all humility in accordance with the decorum due, considering that you are one possessed of knowledge of the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman, that you are so very aged, ever united with *dharma*, and that you have been instructed in the highest philosophy by that great sage who is the disciple of Sūrya:

त्वं ब्रह्मण्यः किल परिणतश्चासि धर्मेण युक्त-स्त्वां वेदान्तेष्वचरमऋषिः सूर्यशिष्यः शशास । इत्याचारादसि यदि मया प्रश्रयेयणोपजुष्ट-स्तर्क्ति रोषादविदितभयं कर्कशानि ब्रवीषि ॥

Mahāviracharita 3,26

The exposition of Yājñavalkya to Janaka and the long conversation between Sulabhā and Janaka, both in the Anuśāsanaparva are specially revealing in vividly presenting the greatness of Janaka. Yājñavalkya tells him that it is by the grace of Sūrya that this, his flowery speech, was vouchsafed to him. He explains that what is reached by adhyātma meditation, is the source of adhibhūta, free from the three guṇas, satva, rajas, and tamas the unknowable and unswerving, peaceful, eternal, fixed, undiminishing and explained at length in Sāmkhya and Yoga, is experienced by those calm like the waveless ocean and know no fear:

अध्यात्मचिन्तागन्तव्यमादिभूते च कारणम् । गुणत्रयविनिर्मुक्तमक्षरं वेद्यवीजतम् ॥ सांख्ययोगोदितं शान्तं शाश्वतं ध्रुवमव्ययम् । निस्तरङ्गोदिधिनिभा युक्ताः पश्यन्ति निर्भयाः ॥ सूर्यप्रसादाद्वदनं प्रविष्टा मे सरस्वती । तयास्मि वेदकुद्भुत्वा सारमेव पदं श्रितः ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1066-1068.

The other episode, the conversation between Sulabhā and Janaka, is equally interesting, Sulabhā holding a triple rod (tridanda) as a nun,

with the distinction of one that had realised the Absolute, came to see Janaka in Mithila, soaring on high in the sky. She however encountered him in the perfection of beauty and alluring youth, with the sheen in her body so attractive as to almost make her appear smeared with ambrosia. Janaka received and entertained her with honour. In his assembly she brightened up the entire atmosphere with her lustre, entered Janaka's body through her yogic power for a while and appeared almost somnolent. Janaka, aware of her mind (bhāva). asked her who she was appearing like moonlight arising from the ambrosial ocean of the mind. I am the disciple of Pañchasikha, the great sage of Samkhya, the greatest of the discriminating masters. I am a king, yet have attained ultimate liberation. I just wear the crown and jewels, allow the umbrella to be held over me and the chauris waved. though I have completely eliminated all desires. I live in my own penance grove of peace with my mind calm and collected in all that I do. Pañchaśikha has burnt up all my desires by initiating me into the knowledge of the Self. By the power of the seed of that knowledge no desire arises in me in any cognizable object. For me who am severely alone by myself, a house is neither for peace For those who are untainted by anything, nor for bondage. liberation can be everywhere and nowhere. How and why have you entered my body through your yoga. All confusion arises because of differential notions in caste, lineage, stages in life and others. If you want to overcome me, your mind may start on it. It is the fault of your own view in philosophy that you are touching me through your yoga i.e. occupying me in all my limbs, yourself being an avowed untainted woman (satī), and still you are not ashamed. Tell me the reason and speak the truth. So addressed in a severe tone, she never quailed, but, with a brow raised and a smile on her lips, she spoke though she had entered like a shade and stood before him in a great assembly of the best of men. Oh king! Being yourself one released from bondage, that you talk of a difference as existing between you and me does not appear right. You are asking me who and whence I am, questions that are meaningless. Have you not heard that all that is composed of elements is like a wooden toy. Thirty parts of gunas compose the form of any object. For whom is it that this meaningful cycle does not exist? Thought of fertility continues till old age is reached like the lamp burning with its glow

till the oil is consumed. The body is not connected even with its own limbs as it is unconnected with the world itself, what to talk of the soul which is always free and which you see as if it were a reflection in a mirror. It appears strange that having attained liberation your question is based on differential notion. It appears like the garland of victory for the elephant that is struck on the battlefield. I consider that liberated as you feel continuing as a ruler of a vast kingdom, you are like one terribly tormented by heat in a desert but yet feeling no thirst. The chauris are still waved for you and you are covered by the umbrella. Fortune, by the waves of its pride, always destroys discrimination. Trivial matters, like an army lost on the battlefield or a prince killed, unfortunately create sorrow among kings. With wealth in the treasury, the elephants in the stables, the ministers in their mansions, the queen at one edge of the bed couch at night, you still think you are alone and apart. You imagine that your body is lying on the bed still breathing but quite apart from the golden bangles and necklace, your mind away from everything, and yet you run after things in dreams. I am a beggar woman having no house and myself void of everything. In this your body, I have just spent one night and what is wrong in that? Oh king! I have not touched your body but I have only occupied it by yoga. How do you know that I have touched you when you are free from all attachments? How can Pañchasikha be your guru. You are afraid of the mixing up of varnas (castes) and) āśramas (stations in life). The explanation given by you that the seed of knowledge cannot grow without the proper sprout from it is useless. as you are unable to see it properly in regard to objects of enjoyment. We are absolutely quite indivisible from the refugee and the refuge like the creeper on the tree, the flower on the creeper and bee on it. If you see difference anywhere it is only in your talk. Therefore in this difference which is only in a small part where is there a mix up in the entirety? You have neither relinquished action nor are you attuned to complete inaction; like Triśanku in midair you are neither in heaven nor on the earth. You are neither wholly mine nor am I completely yours. Not having reached this stage how do you Oh king! call yourself liberated. So admonished by the words of Sulabhā, Janaka. neither pleased nor unhappy, just kept silent:

त्रिदण्डघारिणी मुक्ता सुलभा नाम भिक्षुकी। मिथिलां जनकं द्रष्टुं पुरा प्रायाद्विहायसा॥

यौवनाभरणं रूपं दघती स्म सुमध्यमा। ददर्श जनकं कान्ता लावण्यललिताकृतिः ॥..... चके सम्चितां पूजां तस्यै पाद्यासनादिभिः।..... सभायां जनकं चक्रे रिमिभिः स्वीकृतान्तरम् ।..... तद्भावस्पृष्टभावोऽथ वभाषे दन्तकान्तिभिः। अयि चित्तसुधासिधुचन्द्रिका कासि कस्य वा ।।..... शिष्यः पञ्चशिखस्याहं सांख्यवेदविदो मुने:। विवेकास्त्रविदां श्रेष्ठो मोक्षं प्राप्तो जनाधिप: ॥ किरीटी कङ्गणधरः छत्रव्यजनवाहनः। मृण्डितेच्छः शमारण्यो मनः कर्मप्रसादनः॥ स्वन्तवोधकपालेऽस्मिन् प्लूय्टं पञ्चिशिखेन मे । ज्ञानबीजस्य सामर्थ्याद्विषयेषु न जायते।। नैकान्तवासिता शान्त्यै न गेहं वन्धनाय च। सर्वत्र विहिता नाम मुक्तिनिर्लेपचेतसाम् ॥ अन्तःप्रवेशः किमयं त्वया मे योगतः कृतः। सङ्गरः ॥..... वर्णगोत्राश्रामादीनां विभेदादेष अयं स्वशास्त्रदोपश्च तव स्पृशसि यत्परान् ॥ सर्वाङ्गसङ्घं कृरूपे सती भूत्वा न लज्जसे।..... इति पृष्टातिपरुषं न घैर्यात्संचचाल सा। ईपद्रन्निमतैकभूहीसपल्लविताधरा ॥ सा बभाषे प्रविष्टापि छायेव पुरतः स्थिता ।..... मुक्तश्च भेदवक्ता चेत्यहो राजन्न राजसे ॥ कासि कस्य कृतो वा त्वं यदेवमभिघीयते। तत्र किं न श्रुतं काष्ठजन्त्वद्गणभौतिकम् ॥ त्रिशद्र णकलाकारो व्यक्तो व्यक्तत्वमागतः। संघातस्तत्वचक्रस्य सोऽयं कस्य न कस्य वा ॥ शुक्रसेकाद्यवस्थास्ता न लक्ष्यन्ते जराविध। दीपस्येवाचिषो याता यस्य सोऽयं कृतः कथम् ।।..... विकल्पं पृच्छतो नैपा मुक्तता तव शोभते।..... इदं राज्यमपर्यन्तं तिष्ठतस्ते विमुक्तता ।। न मन्येऽहं मरुतटे तप्तस्येव वितृष्णता। चामरैलॉलयन्त्येव छत्रैराच्छादयन्ति च॥ विवेकं मदकल्लोलैर्हरन्ति च नृणां श्रिय: ।..... भिक्षकी शुन्यानिलया शुन्येऽस्मिँस्तव विग्रहे। निवसामि क्षपामेकां का नुते नृपते क्षतिः॥ अस्प्रशन्ती वपुस्तेऽहं प्रविष्टा यदि योगतः। तत्कथं नृपते मुक्तः स्पर्श वेत्सि सरागवत् ।।..... अविभिन्ना वंय सर्वे समाश्रयसमाश्रयात्। तरौ लता तत्र पुष्पं तस्मिन् षट्चरणा इव।। सर्वात्मना पृथक्त्वं चेदिति भागं विपश्यसि। तदेकान्तविभिन्नस्य कस्य केनात्र संकरः।। स त्वं प्रवृत्तिविमुखो न च प्राप्तो निवृत्तताम्। त्रिशङ्कुरिव मध्यस्थो न दिवं न भुवं श्रितः।।..... इत्यवाप्तोपदेशार्थः सुलभावचसा नृपः। न हृष्टो नाप्रहृष्टश्च तूष्णी नभ इवाभवत्।।

Bhāratamañjarī 13,1071-1105.

Such a Rājarishi as Janaka himself could be counted Bhīshma, the one who acted but without the least desire for any fruit of action and with the highest ideals and aims in his life. Another Rajarishi, the famous contemporary of Janaka was Ajātaśatru, the king of Kāśī who had also realised the Supreme and who could teach even the great Brahmavādin Driptabālāki of the Garga family, though it was very rare that a Brāhmaṇa Brahmavādin would learn from a Kshatriya. This is one of the rare instances, as Ajātaśatru could instruct him and he did it:

स होवाच अजातशत्रुः । प्रतिलोभं चैतद्यद्ब्राह्मणः क्षत्रियमुपेयात् । ब्रह्म मे वक्ष्यतीति । ब्येव त्वाज्ञापिष्यामीति ।

Brihadāranyaka Upanishad 2,1,15.

For such supreme rishis of the highest order, Rājarishis, Brahmarishis, Maharishis, the highest example however has been Siva as the supreme ascetic. Sages generally shown deeply lost in penance in sculpture reflect this glory. Not only at Mahābalipuram, where the rishis lost in meditation have been graphically pictorially portrayed (Fig. 54), but the picture of Siva as Yogeśvara both at Elephaṇṭā (Fig. 55) and Ellora, is a commentary as it were on the striking description given by Kālidāsa of Siva in meditation, the disturbance of which by Manmatha caused him his life. Siva as Yogeśvara has been idealised as the most unruffled, seated erect in penance in vīrāsana with the yogāpaṭṭa holding his legs in position, his shoulders bent and his hands palm upward placed in his lap like lotuses together:

पर्येङ्कवन्धस्थिरपूर्वकायं ऋज्वायतं संनिमतोभयांसम् । उत्तानपाणिद्वयसन्निवेशात्प्रफुल्लराजीविमवाङ्कमध्ये ॥

Kumārasambhava 3,45.

In Siva's penance is represented the supreme example of the highest

mahāpurusha in action, not to gain anything by an act of his, but just to set an example for others to follow:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु कि चन।

as Krishņa would put it in the Gītā 3,22. Kālidāsa has voiced this in his line that describes him as concentrating only on himself

यमक्षरं क्षेत्रविदो विदुस्तमात्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम्।

Kumārasambhava 3,50

as there was nothing apart from him स्वातिरेकेण परमात्मनीऽभावात as the commentator Mallinatha explains. It is to set an example to the world; and Kālidāsa is eloquent in describing this magnificent ascetic form of Siva, Yogesvara. It has inspired not only the poetry of the sweetest of Indian poets but also inspired the chisel of the greatest Vākātaka sculptor at Elephantā where a masterpiece represents this situation, with his hands so placed, the palms resting one over the other, simulating a lotus pair in bloom, with the yogapatta on his leg, the torso stretched up, the reptile string holding together the mass of locks tied up, the beads of the rosary twisted around the ear, with dark antelope skin across his chest and shoulder tied up in a knot, and made a shade darker by the blue light emitted from his throat, the brows still, the pupils of the eye bright but steady, the eyelids unstirring but the sight concentrated downwards on the tip of the nose, like a laden cloud in no storm to rain, like the very receptacle of waters the ocean unruffled by ripply waves, but with the inner life breath under perfect control, not unlike the flame of the lamp unagitated by the wind itself at standstill, lighting up, as it were, the beauty of the crescent form of the infant moon, more delicate than a lotus fibre, by the rays shooting up from his head through the interstices of the hollows of the eye sockets of the skull adorning his crest, with his mind diverted from all the nine outlets of the sensory organs and fixed on the heart in ascetic trance, contemplating and viewing in himself the highest that the noblest seers have sought. That is Siva who is the great ascetic, the unique example for yoga itself:

> पर्येक्कवन्धस्थरपूर्वकायं ऋज्वायतं संनमितोभयांसम् । उत्तानपाणिद्वयसित्रवेशात्प्रफुल्लराजीविमवाक्कमध्ये ॥ भुजक्कमोन्नद्वजटाकलापं कर्णावसक्तद्विगुणाक्षसूत्रम् । कण्ठप्रभासिक्कविशेषनीलं कृष्णत्वचं ग्रन्थिमतीं द्यानम ॥

किंचित्प्रकाशस्तिमितोग्रतारैर्भू विकियायां विरतप्रसङ्गैः ।
नेत्रैरविस्पन्दितपक्ष्ममालैर्लक्ष्यीकृतद्राणमधोमयूर्लैः ॥
अवृष्टिसंरम्भिमवाम्बुवाहमपामिवाधारमनुत्तरङ्गम् ।
अन्तश्चराणां महतां निरोधान्निवातिष्कमपिमव प्रदीपम् ॥
कपालनेत्रान्तरलब्धमार्गेज्योतिःप्ररोहैहदितैः शिरस्तः ।
मृणालसूत्राधिकसौकुमार्यां बालस्य लक्ष्मीं ग्लपयन्तिमन्दोः ॥
मनो नवद्वारिनिषद्धवृत्ति हृदि व्यवस्थाप्य समाधिवश्यम् ।
यमक्षरं क्षेत्रविदो विदुस्तमात्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 3,45-50.

In the expression of the glory of tapasyā and control of senses, the sculpture of Devī amidst the five fires, so vividly depicted in the Rāmeśvara Cave at Ellora (Fig. 56) and in other representations elsewhere, stands out very prominent (Fig. 57). It is indeed a sculptor's version of Kālidāsa's remarks put in the words of Pārvatī, that concentration and penance were the only means of rendering her extraordinary beauty fruitful, as she was convinced that without the highest aid of asceticism her beauty was of no avail:

इयेष सा कर्तुं मवन्ध्यरूपतां समाधिमास्थाय तपोभिरात्मनः।

Kumārasambhava 5,2.

The sculpture represents her carrying the holy water pot (kamanāalu) and the Palāśa stick (daṇḍa) wearing the antelope skin (kṛishṇājina) as the sacred thread (yajñopavīta). It is a telling carving of the word picture of Kālidāsa describing her as emerging from the bath in the stream, completing her adoration of the fire by appropriate offerings, chanting the holy Veda, attired in the antelope skin as upper garment, with aged sages arrived to meet her, as age counts for nothing among those that have the greatest spiritual experience and naturally are the most senior in knowledge of dharma:

कृताभिषेकां हुतजातवेदसं त्वगुत्तरासङ्ग्वतीमधीतिनीम् । दिद्क्षवस्तां ऋषयोऽभ्युपागमन्न धर्मवृद्धेषु वयः समीक्ष्यते ॥

Kumārasambhava 5,16.

Here penance amidst five fires, a favourite theme in sculpture, is described by Kālidāsa. Centrally stationed amidst four blazing fires, and with immaculate smile on her face, expressive of her cool feeling towards the blaze of the fire, the slender-waisted beauty overcame the blinding light of even the sun; and concentrating her eye ever on the solar orb, she overcame thus the blinding light of in-

fatuation, thus absorbing the highest light from the sun, the light of supreme knowledge:

शुचौ चतुर्णा ज्वलतां हिवर्भु जां शुचिस्मिता मध्यगता सुमध्यमा। विजित्य नेत्रप्रतिधातिनीं प्रभामनन्यदृष्टिः सवितारमैक्षत।। Kumārasambhava 5,20.

It was not only the kāyakleśa or the complete disregard for even the creature comforts for the body which was put to a rigorous discipline of experiencing excruciating pain caused by heat and cold, but also by a gradual giving up of even the minimum food to sustain the body. While the most rigorous asceticism allowed at least the partaking of a few leaves as a simple fare to keep alive the means of winning dharma,

शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्

Kumārasambhava 5,33,

though delicately nurtured earlier, she went beyond the zenith of the highest act of penance where the food of the sages was restricted to just a few dried fallen leaves, and having given up even these, the sweet-spoken princess acquired fame being appropriately styled by the aged seers Aparnā, the one who discarded even leaves:

> स्वयंविशीर्णद्गुमपर्णवृत्तिता परा हि काष्ठा तपसस्तया पुन:। तदप्यपाकीर्णमत: प्रियंवदां वदन्त्यपर्णेति च तां पुराविद:।। Kumārasambhava 5,28.

Pārvatī's tapasyā is almost recalled in the penance contemplated by Sītā abandoned by Rāma, who thinks of her eye fixed on the sun in complete contemplation, her desire, the great pativratā that she is, being, in spite of the almost apparent injustice to her by Rāma, that the fruit of her severe penance may in her next birth also secure Rāma alone as her consort with no further separation from him as it had now occurred:

> साहं तथा सूर्यनिबद्धदृष्टिरूध्वं प्रसूतेश्चरितुं यतिष्ये। भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेपि त्वमेव भर्ता न च विप्रयोग: ॥

> > Raghuvamśa 14,66.

The nāndīśloka of the Mrichchhakaţika describing Śiva in samādhi is an eloquent picture of Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti. This is a close parallel of Yogeśvara described by Kālidāsa. Śūdraka pictures it as the form of Śiva that protects the universe as he sits in yogic stance, with the long snake wrapped up twice around his knees in the paryaṅka

yogapatta, with his life breath suspended, the action of all the sensory organs completely at a standstill and conscious of naught else except the unique truth of vision by which he perceives himself, the universal soul, in himself, pervading the universe, his physical vision blank:

पर्यं ङ्कः,ग्रन्थिबन्धद्विगुणितभुजगाश्लेषसंवीतजानो-रन्त: प्राणावरोधव्युपरतसकलज्ञानरुद्धे न्द्रियस्य । आत्मन्यात्मानमेव व्यपगतकरणं पश्यतस्तत्वदृष्ट्या शम्भोर्वः पातु शून्येक्षणघटितलयब्रह्मलग्नः समाधिः ॥

The painter, in depicting this beautiful situation of Siva lost in penance as Yoga Dakshināmūrti has made him also look not only at his own self, which cannot the immanent escape that is everywhere, but also in that train, as part of himself, the highest dance of apsarasas. This is the painting of Yoga-Dakshināmūrti (Fig. 58) from the Chola series of murals in the Rajarajeśvara Temple at Tañjāvur. He is the great dancer, lord of dance, the propagator of dance and connoisseur of dance as well by appreciating the nuances of the art practised by others like the celestial nymphs. The Vishnudharmottara lays down that nātya like sangīta is a great mode of ārādhanā of the lord, and Siva is never so pleased as when



Fig. 58 Yoga Dakshiņāmūrti watching Apsarasas dance, Chola, 1000 A.D., Rājarājeśvara Temple, Tañjāvur.

he is worshipped by an offering of the best in nātya: सोऽपि तुष्यित नृत्तेन सम्यगाराधितो हरः।

Vishnudharmottara 3,34,23.

It is not only this. Nritta is supposed to be a greater offering to the Almighty than flowers, food, incence and other offerings:

पुष्पनैवेद्यदानेभ्यो नृत्तदानं विशिष्यते।

Vishnudharmottara 3,34,25.

The importance of dance is given in this that one who can by himself dance and offers it has really achieved that highest worship. The offering of music, vocal and instrumental, and dance assures the highest fruit attained by the performance of sacrifice, assuring the fulfilment of even impossible desires. But, livelihood through dance and drama was looked down on and, though the professional commanded very little respect, the connosseur who offered his knowledge of dance for the glory of God was assured moksha or the attainment of liberation itself:

स्वयं नृत्तेन यः कुर्याद्देवदेवस्य पूजनम् । विशेषेण महाभाग तस्य तुष्यति केशवः ॥ नृत्तं गीतं तथा वाद्यं दत्वा देवाय विष्णवे । सर्वकामसमृद्धस्य यज्ञस्य फलमश्नुते ॥ नृत्तेन वृत्ति यः कुर्यात्स तु वज्यः प्रयत्नतः ॥ कुशीलवाद्ययः कुर्यात्म त्तविक्रयकारकः ॥ देवताराधनं कुर्याद्यस्तु नृत्तेन धर्मवित् । स सर्वकामानाप्नोति मोक्षोपायं च विन्दति ॥

Vishnudharmottara 3,34,26-29.

While Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti emphasises concentration, where one is completely oblivious of physical surroundings and the attention is diverted to a single object, as in the case of Arjuna who could see not even the total fish but only the eye that he was to shoot, Naṭarāja represents the concentration in dance as one of the offerings to the Almighty, where again wholehearted concentration would need the dancer oblivious in regard to every other object around him, as he is lost in his own world of expression in the language of abhinaya, through hastas, karaṇas and aṅgahāras or in rhythmic pattern of dance nritta, where tāla and laya dominate (Fig. 59).

Again as Vīņādhara he is Dakshiņāmūrti, the presiding deity

over music, which is also a path for the utmost concentration and attainment of the fruit of the worship of the Lord, i.e. moksha. This has been clearly expressed by Tyāgarāja in one of his songs (kritis), mokshamu kaladā. While in this, rāga and pāṭhya text matter, in the Mridanga Dakshnāmūrti aspect of Śiva, it is rather tāla and laya. There are a number of fine examples of Vīnādhara Dakshināmūrti. To the earliest Choļa phase of art belongs the one from the Mūvar Temple at Kodumbāļur. The most lovely one of this form is the seated one from the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora belonging to the fifth century and created by a great Vākāṭaka sculptor (Fig. 60). Mridanga Dakshināmūrti has representation in a Rāshṭrakūṭa sculptor's creation in the Kailāsa temple at Ellora (Fig. 61); and a unique early Pāṇḍyan sculpture from the rock-cut temple at Kaļugumalai proclaims the appreciation of the theme by a Pāṇḍyan sculptor (Fig. 62).

Śiva as Medhā Dakshiṇāmūrti (Fig. 63) represents the acme of the intellect that leads on to the highest truth or parā vidyā that opens the floodgates of jñanā. Here his hand in chinmudrā itself represents the supreme knowledge. It answers the Vedic prayer,

स मेऽन्द्रो मेधया स्पृणोतु । मेधां म इन्द्रो दधातु मेधां देवी सरस्वती ।
Nārāyanīyāyājñikyupanishad.

In this form Siva is to be likened to the highest guru who opens the eye, not the physical eye but the spiritual eye:

चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः।

This form is mentioned in the Śatarudrīya as Upavītine as yajñopavīta is worn in the vastra yajñopavīta form mainly by Dakshiṇāmūrti. The whole concept of Dakshiṇāmūrti is to emphasise the highest jñana, the medhā of Dakshiṇāmūrti revealed by mauna, silence, that imparts everything even to the oldest seers, themselves repositories of learning:

वर्षिष्ठान्तेवसदृषिगणैरावृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः । आचार्येन्द्रं करकलितचिन्मुद्रमानन्दरूपं स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ।।

Dakshināmūrtistotra.

It is describing this form that Sankara brings in the parable of sarpa and rajju for the world, the dream and the awakened state, when alone, as after the attainment of supreme knowledge, the reality

that it was all earlier a dream is realised and then readily comprehended:

> यः साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाव्ययं तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

> > Dakshināmūrtistotra. 1

Just as Śiva as Vīṇādhara is example for concentration on the Lord through rāga and tāla, Naṭarāja, through nāṭya. abhinaya and bhāva, Yoga Dakshiṇāmūrti is the model for concentration on the inner self by the control of senses:

आत्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तम्

Kumārasambhava 3,50.

आत्मन्यात्मानमेव व्यपगतकरणं पश्यतस्तत्वदृष्ट्या

Mrichchhakatika 1,1

The third preference according to the understanding of Brahman as the highest is voiced in the opinion of Nāka, son of sage Mudgala, that svādhyāya and pravachana, learning and imparting of knowledge of the Vedas and the great truth revealed in them is the highest: and that he feels is tapasyā that reveals the Supreme One Brahma, tapas that is the means of attaining the eternal:

स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाको मौद्गल्यः। तद्धि तपस्तद्धि तपः।
Taittirīya Upanishad 1,9.

The importance of svādhyāya and study has been sufficiently stressed almost everywhere.

Svādhyaya or Vedic study is as a duty to be accomplished without the expectation of any return from the knowledge. Medicine engineering, political seience, music, dance, sculpture, painting and other professional subjects studied with a worldly purpose of livelihood are different from the Veda, the study of which leads to the highest goal of the realisation of the self in relation to the Infinite. That is why it is laid down that a Brāhmaṇa should just for its own sake study the Veda with its correct intonation and understand its connotation:

ब्राह्मणेन निष्कारणो धर्मः पडङ्को वेदोऽध्येयो ज्ञेयश्च ।

Yāska the author of the ancient work Nirukta on the exegesis of the Vedas has categorically mentioned not only the importance of the svara or intonation but also the knowldge of the import of the text.

One who has studied the *Veda* but knows not its import becomes just a pillar supporting its weight. Only that one who understands its meaning enjoys the good in it, and with his sins washed away by the true understanding goes to heaven. Whatever is learnt without understanding it is just sound uttered, and like dry twigs placed on an altar without fire can never flame up. Seeing the utterance he yet does not see it. Hearing it he yet hears it not. But to the other the speech reveals herself like the well-dressed wife displaying her body to her consort. Lovingly long drunk deep, uncomprehended, it helps him not either as food, but only serves the illusion of a cow him who hears speech without comprehending its flower and fruit:

स्थाणुरयं भारहारः किलाभूदधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति योऽर्थम् । योऽर्थज्ञ इत्सकलं भद्रमश्नुते नाकमेति ज्ञानविधूतपाप्मा ।। यद्गृहीतमविज्ञातं निगदेनैव शब्द्यते । अनग्नाविव शुष्कैधो न तज्ज्वलित किह चित् ।। उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचं उत त्वः श्रृण्वण् न श्रृणोत्येनाम् ।। उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ।। उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नेनं हिन्वन्त्यिप वाजिनेषु । अधेन्वा चरित माययैव वाचं शुश्रुवामफलामपुष्पाम् ।।

Nirukta 1,18,19.

To understand the arrangement and contexts of the *Veda* itself, with its division of *maṇḍalas*, *anuvākas*, seers and *sūktas* (divisions, sections and hymns), knowledge of the seer (*rishi*) deity (*devatā*) and metre (*chhandas*) was necessary, and it was therefore laid down that one who taught or uttered the text without knowing the respective *rishi*, *chhandas* and *daivata* got polluted by sin:

अविदित्वा ऋषि छन्दो दैवतं योगमेव च। योऽध्यापयेज्जपेद्वापि पापीयान् जायते तु सः।।

This is further explained. The *rishi's* utterance is the text. What is described in it is the *devatā*. The measure of letters composing it is

chhandas. The rishis who were keen after proper understanding of the text ran after the knowledge of the devatās and chhandas:

यस्य वाकंच स ऋषिः। या तेनोच्यते सा देवता। यदक्षरपरिमाणं तच्छन्द: । अर्थेप्सव ऋषयो देवताच्छन्दोभिरुपधावत। Sarvānukramaṇī

The study of Vedāngas, particularly grammer, (vyākaraṇa) prosody (chhandas), etymology (nirukta) was for a clear comprehension of the import of the Vedas. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita righly remarks when he says with amazement that there are so many themes in the Vedas, equally numerous are śākhās or divisions of the Vedas, and, their finale in the Upanishads is itself multifarious and multiform. How many may ever and in how many lives to be born over and over again can gain that mastery of the language to understand the import of the Vedas completely baffling comprehension:

एकैकवेदविषया: क्रित नाम शाखास्तासां शिरांसि कितनाम पृथग्विधानि । अर्थाववोधविधुरो ऽ क्षरलाभ एव केषां नृणां कितिभरस्तु शरीरवन्धैः ॥

Ānandasāgarastava 8.

The importance of svara or intonation is so great that it is held that a mantra or hymn uttered with defect in intonation or even the letters composing it, at once becomes misused and no more conveys its true import; not only that, it becomes a thunderbolt of speech and strikes the very sacrificer, like when the mantra commencing 'indra-satruh' was mispronounced in regard to its intonation:

मन्त्रो हीनः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तमर्थमाह। स बाग्वज्ञो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराघात्।। Rig Upodghāta

Svādhyāya comes up appropriately in the context of young rishis, rishikumāras, expected to lead the life of impeccable brahmacharya to acquire the supreme knowledge of the Veda. A sculpture of Agni now in the Cleveland Museum is unique from the point of view of the life of brahmacharya devoted to svādhyāya or the study of the Veda. The life of the brahmachārī is probably nowhere so well represented as here in panels one below the other on either side of the figure of Agni, giving scenes from the life of the disciple (Fig 64). In

this the position of the pupil in the presence of the master(guru) is well represented. He sits on a less eelevated seat than his master, with his hands in an attitude of obedience, and the guru holds his hand in the attitude of teaching. The brahmānjali of the pupil, the palms held together, as if to receive or offer flowers, is to respectfully receive the tiny drops of saliva from the mouth at the time of the utterance of the Veda which are so holy that their fall on the ground is thus avoided. This is an indication of how reverentially he receives brahmavidyā, the knowledge offered by the master. His dress should be as simple as his heart pure:

ब्रह्माञ्जलिकृतोऽध्याप्यो लघुवासा जितेन्द्रियः ।

Manusmriti 2,70

Before and after his studies, the student is expected to bow to the master and in that process repeat his name, and his lineage (pravara) and the branch of Veda (charana) that he studies: and in so doing, touch the feet of the master, crossing his hands, so that the right hand touches the right foot of the teacher and the left the left. This is the most respectful way of obeisance and is graphically presented in the sculpture the significance of which is best understood when one brings to one's mind the verse of Manu on this point:

ब्रह्मारम्भेऽवसाने च पादौ ग्राह्मौ गुरोः सदा। संहत्य हस्तावध्येयं स हि ब्रह्मांजिलः स्मृतः।। व्यत्यस्तपाणिना कार्यमुपसंग्रहणं गुरोः। सव्येन सव्यः स्प्रष्टव्यो दक्षिणेन च दक्षिणः।।

Manusmriti 2,71-72.

Even the salutation (vandana), sāshṭānga praṇāma, as it is known to the minute detail of the proper hand touching the proper foot during the utterance of the charaṇa and pravara, is well portrayed in the sculpture. This mode of crossing the hands is known as hastasvastika and hastasvastika not in dance, but in anushṭhāna. The simple dress, the low seat, brahmāṇjali are all the rites, which included samidādhāna or offering of twigs in the fire. Here however ājyahoma or homa with ghee, which normally was not done by the brahmachārin but only by the grihastha is also depicted. The brahmachārin is shown with ājyapātra, pouring ghee in the fire, in doing the purṇāhuti,

सप्त ते अग्ने सिमधः सप्त जिह्वाः सप्त ऋषयः सप्त धाम प्रियाणि सप्त होत्राः सप्तधा त्वा यजान्ति सप्त योनीरापृणस्व घृतेन स्वाहा।

Taittirīya Samhitā 1,5,3.

This ājyāhuti offering of ghee in the fire, with the boy shown a little grown up and significantly in the panel, is to indicate his daily karma as a newly married grihastha after samāvartana or the brahmachārī's return home to become a householder, including the vasordhārā stream of ghee poured as the finale after the usual pākayajāa or the householder's sacrifice to be distinguished from paśubandha which is not a daily rite but only occasional. This sculpture thus represents the brahmachārī's life till he enters gārhasthya, after the guru, in his joy at the successful completion of the education of his disciple, has permitted him the second stage of life.

The tending of the fire by performing samidādhāna, procuring food by bhikshā and attendance on the guru,

दूरादाहृत्य सिमधः संनिदध्याद्विहायसि । सायं प्रातश्च जुहुयात्ताभिरिग्नमतिन्द्रतः ।। अकृत्वा भैक्षचरणमसिमध्य च पावकम् । अनातुरः सप्तरात्रमवकीर्णव्रतं चरेत् ॥

Manusmriti 2,186-187,

are the prescribed duties of the Brahmachārin:

अग्नीन्धनं भैक्षचर्यमधःशय्यं गुरोहितम् । आसमावर्तनात्कुर्यात्कृतोपनयनो द्विजः ॥

Manusmṛiti 2,108.

Āchamana, or sipping of the of water, which is one of the most common practices preceding and succeeding every daily item like the bath, sandhyā, meals, and so fourth, has sculptural representation in the panels depicting Gangāvisarjanamūrti, from Ellora, where Jahnu sips up Gangā in one āchamanīya. The feeding of the pupils after the mādhyandina sandhyā is represented in a long Gupta frieze from Garhwā in the Lucknow Museum (Fig. 65) depicting the events of the day from dawn to dusk.

In the case of the hermit boys (rishikumāras), the disciples after the upanayana, conducting the boy unto the master,

गृह्योक्तकर्मणा येन समीपं नीयते गुरोः। बालो वेदाय तद्योगाद्वालस्योपनयं विदुः॥

was the essential samskāra which was as it were the background for the discipline set for study itself (Fig. 66). That is why the word vinaya is used for study, and even Buddha has a holy piţaka book on the discipline for the monks which is a teaching, Vinayapiţaka. Raghu enquires of Kautsa, the disciple of sage Varatanta, whether the sage, pleased with his performance in studies and conduct, having properly instructed him in the highest learning — the word used here is vināta in the phrase samyag vināya very well trained in utmost humility — permitted him to become a householder, as it was the proper time for him to enter the second stage of life which was the most serviceable to the entire community:

अपि प्रसन्नेन महर्षिणा त्वं सम्यग्विनीयानुमतो गृहाय । कालो ह्ययं संक्रमित्ं द्वितीयं सर्वोपकारक्षममाश्रमं ते ॥

Raghuvamśa 5,10.

Snāna, sandhyā, sūryopasthāna and japa are very important in nitya-karmānushṭhāna daily ritual. The Dharmaśāstras have laid great stress on the personal conduct and cleanliness of man from morning till night. His every action is governed by laws of cleanliness and godliness. It is these that constitute what is known as āchāra. A study of the Dharmaśāstra is very interesting for understanding the daily routine of man as it was conceived and followed. There are several sculptures in India and in islands and countries on the sea, like Java, Bali, Ceylon, Malaya and Cambodia which throw great light on some of these sadāchāras.

At Mahābalipuram a large boulder fully carved with the theme of Arjuna's penance has a portion of it very significant for understanding the life of sages and hermit boys, munikumāras (Fig. 67). We can learn so much about snāna, sandhyā, sūryopasthāna and japa from this. The scene is laid on the banks of the Gangā suggested by carvings of Nāgas and Nāginīs in human form with hoods over their heads. On the banks of the river, there are rishikumāras shown having

their bath. One of them has finished his bath and is wringing his cloth of the water in it. To understand this we should see the context in the *smṛiti* and *gṛihyasūtras* about $v\bar{a}sodaka$. Another has filled his pot with water to be taken to the hermitage for the daily $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$. The significance of the water of the river in the vicinity of the hermitage for easy carriage for different religious purposes is given by Kālidāsa in his verse,

निर्वर्त्यते यैनियमाभिषेको येभ्यो निवापाञ्जलयः प्रितृणाम् । तान्युञ्छपष्ठाङ्कितसैकतानि शिवानि वस्तीर्थजलानि किच्चत् ॥ Raghuvamsa 5,8.

where he describes Raghu enquiring of Kautsa whether the holy water in their river fared well, water which was meant for the ritual of daily ablutions performed, and for handfuls offered to the manes, the sandy dunes of which were marked by a sixth part of corn gleaned as bali or offering to the state. It may be recalled that elsewhere, the sixth parth of gleaned coarse grain was offered by even the sages to the state regularly as bali.

Another Munikumāra has his hands raised up and clasped in an attitude known as yamapāśamudrā, to see the sun through the aperture so created by interlocking the fingers in that manner. This is the usual mode during the sūryopasthāna after the mādhyandinasandhyā, sandhyā worship at midday, and incidentally it also points to the time of the day. By this device the sculpture interestingly indicates not only the time but also the particular sandhyā which is performed. The next stage in the performance of sandhyā is suggested in the figure of another munikumāra close by, who is bowing to the four directions standing with his hands in añjali, saying

सन्ध्यायै नमः, सावित्र्यै नमः, गायत्रचौ नमः, सरस्वत्यै नमः

facing east, south, west and north respectively. The rishis, several of whom are shown seated in the vicinity of a shrine of Vishņu, some of them with the yogapatta tied around their legs, some in yogāsana, according to their taste and convenience, are all of them engaged in tapas and japa. This sculpture is all the more significant when we compare them with the attitude of rishis described by Kālidāsa in his

Kumārasambhava in a similar context.

The river, with its hundreds of immaculate waves darting high seems almost to proclaim to the denizens of heaven the glory of a look at the Gangā, the dip in it and the sip of its water, The sandy dunes are liberally strewn and scattered by the sages with flowers, fresh green dūrvā grass and akshatas or holy rice in their balikarma or the offerings to the celestials after their bath. The banks are studded with sages seated in brahmāsana, lost in complete contemplation on the Supreme One and in the peculiar sleepless meditative concentration, with their legs bound by bands of yogapatta, standing sometimes on the toe of a single foot with their eye fixed on the orb of the sun, taking on to themselves the essence of the Eternal One, themselves being Brahmarishis of the highest order:

शुश्रेरभ्रंकषैरूर्मिशतैः स्वर्गनिवासिनाम् । कथयन्तीमिवालोकावगाहाचमनादिकम् ॥ सुस्नातानां मुनीन्द्राणां बलिकमोचितैरलभ् । वहिः पुष्पोत्करैः कीर्णतीरां दूर्वाक्षतान्वितैः ॥ अह्मघ्यानपरैयोगपरब्रह्मासनस्थितैः । योगनिद्रागतैयोगपट्टबन्धैरुपासिताम् ॥ पादाङ्कुष्ठाग्रभूमिस्थैः सूर्यसंबद्धदृष्टिभिः । ब्रह्माष्टिभः परं ब्रह्म गृणद्भिरुपसेविताम् ॥

Kumārasambhava 10,44-47.

All this is on the picturesque site on the sandy slopes of the great river Gangā that, never fatigued, eternally purifies the three worlds with its three streams:

त्रिभिः स्रोतोभिरश्रान्तं पुनाना भुवनत्रयम् ।

Kumārasambhava 10,31.

The love between the teacher and the taught was an ideal. Even in the study of the highest texts in the simplest atmosphere, under the trees in the forest, in the hermitage, the pupil clad in simple attire, facing the teacher and in his proximity, (upanishad seated so close) puts forth a prayer in the form of a śānti-pāṭha or a text of peace, which is his heartfelt desire to ever revere the master and the master ever to love him. May the Lord protect us both, the teacher

and the taught. May we be nourished, may we work effectively in close unison. May our study be of the highest glory and lustre. May hatred be eliminated from us and may we be most loving, the teacher and the taught. Thrice I repeat. May there be peace:

सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै। तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु। मा विद्विषावहै। ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 2,1.

There is a sculpture from Bhārhut representing a venerable sage discoursing on the highest parā vidyā to his discples gathered around him, attentively listening to his teachings. Fortunately at Bhārhut almost every sculpture has a label in early Brāhmī script explaining its purport. Here the label says dīrghatapasī sise anusāsati meaning the rishi Dīrghatapas is discoursing to his disciples (Fig. 68).

This sculpture is to be understood in the context of the early picture in the *Upanishads* of the āchārya teaching his disciples. The word here used is also anuśāsana as in the Taittirīyopanishad, There is a special appraisal of the theme of vidyā,

अथाधिविद्यम् । आचार्यः पूर्वरूपम् । अन्तेवास्युत्तररूपम् । विद्या सन्धः । प्रवचनं सन्धानम् । इत्यिधिविद्यम् । Taittirīya Upanishad 1,3,3.

Again in the same Upanishad there is the picture of the teacher admonishing his students after the study is over, and here expressly the word used is anuśāsti, followed by satyam vada, dharmam chara etc. Even in the label at Bhārhut the expression is anuśāsati. This is the earliest example in sculpture answering the Upanishadic word-picture of the teacher surrounded by pupils. There is the guru's uchchāraṇa and the pupil's anūchchāraṇa or the repeating of the master's utterance by the disciples to memorize the text. In ancient India all vidyā was gained by the ear and was so named śruta. Veda itself was śruti and the Vedic text was carefully recited with proper intonation sasvaro vedaḥ. The Veda representing parā-vidyā was learnt to be repeated according to svara. This adhyayana, particularly the āraṇyaka portions, were in tapovanas, penance groves, in hermitages close to rivers as described by Manu:

अपां समीपे नियते नैत्यिकं विधिमास्थित: । सावित्रीमप्यधीयीत गत्वारण्यं समाहित: ।।

Manusmṛiti 2.104.

It has to be remembered in this context that the label for the Bhārhut panel dīrghatapas is very significant as it is a modification of the name of Dīrghatamas born of Mamatā by her husband the sage Utathya, elder brother of Brihaspati. When he was yet in the womb of his mother as a foetus he was of great Vedic knowledge and lustre. Aśvaghosha uses the term Dīrghatapas in comparing Kapila in his importance as a seer to this sage, though the correct name of the great sage known to the Rigveda is Dirghatamas

माहात्भ्याद्दीर्घतपसो यो द्वितीय इवाभवत्

Sundarananda 1,4.

By a curse the child in the womb was born blind and was known as Dīrghatamas:

उत्तथ्यपत्नीममतासमुत्पन्नो...शप्तोन्धो दीर्घतमनामाभवत् । Vishnupurāṇa 4,19,5.

It is also possible that the word dirghatapas is after dirghasandhya mentioned by Manu as responsible for the great longevity of the sages:

ऋषयो दीर्घसन्ध्यत्वादीर्घमायुरवाप्नुयुः।

Manusmuriti

It is believed that the master affectionately imparted the most coveted and even the most valued secret learning to the beloved student:

ब्र्यु: स्निग्धस्य शिष्यस्य गुरवो गुह्यमप्युत ।

Śrimad Bhāgavata 1,1,8.

Rāma who learnt the most impossible potential weapons and their use from Viśvāmitra is a great example. Rāma is astonished that the little boys Kuśa and Lava could know the great astras that he alone had learnt from Viśvāmitra who after a long disciplehood learned from Kṛiśāśva. The order of learning also is Kṛiśāśva, the great sage from whom Kauśika learnt who taught Rāma and these had been vouchsafed along with the Jṛimbhaka missiles to the two boys:

कृशश्वः कौशिको राम इति येषां गुरुकमः। प्रादुर्भवन्ति तान्येव शस्त्राणि सह जुम्भकै:।।

Uttararāmacharita 7,9.

The study by itself was not considered so effective except when combined with character. Every young rishikumāra pupil was instructed while studying to practice the highest ethical principles as a background for taking in, retaining and enhancing the glory of learning. Study itself was composed first of the pupil's utterance closely following the teacher's utterance and exposition. The reciting of the text to oneself, understanding its connotation and retaining it in an amazingly clear manner was to make it fit to be imparted in turn to a future generation of pupils. The requisite for this learning and imparting of the learning was the highest ethical code, adherence to truth, penance, control of senses or self-restraint, peaceful disposition, tend-of the three fires and their adoration, honour to the guests and fellow beings and finally preparing oneself to have worthy progeny after the samāyartana:

ऋतं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। सत्यं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।
तपश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। दमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।
गमरच स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। अग्नयश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।
अग्निशं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। अतिथयश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।
मानुषं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। प्रजा च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।
प्रजनश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। प्रजातिश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।

Taittiriya Upanishad 1,9.

The highest principles were therefore included in both the teacher and the taught as essential prerequisites of action. The teacher almost treated the pupil as his own son. Many of them were Kulapatis. In fact, in the Abhijāānaśākuntalam, Kaṇva is described as a Kulapati. A Kulapati could maintain a thousand pupils, feed, clothe, shelter and impart education to them in different branches of knowledge. If the teacher wanted riches, it was not in a selfish sense, but to be able to effectively take care of such a huge congregation of pupils. This was the aim and ideal. It was certainly not in an ignoble, lesser instinct of greed or selfishness. Most of the sages, when the pupil was leaving, would never accept even a token fee, as they had no desires. It was only when he was importuned by Kautsa

on completion of his study that sage Varatantu demanded the impossible fee of fourteen crores of gold. The great sage, reverently asked by the pupil to accept the teacher's fee, considered more than enough his devoted and unfailing service to him for ever so long as enough recompense, but importuned again and again, the preceptor roused to anger, heedless of the impossibility of it, asked him to fetch fourteen crores of gold to equal in number the fourteen branches of knowledge that he had taught him:

समाप्तिवद्येन मया महर्षिविज्ञापितोऽभूद्गुरुदक्षिणायै। स मे चिरायास्खलितोपचारां तां भक्तिमेवागणयत्पुरस्तात्।। निर्वन्धसंजातरुषार्थकार्श्यमचिन्तियत्वा गुरुणाहमुक्तः। वित्तस्य विद्यापिरसंख्यया मे कोटीश्चतस्रो दश चाहरेति।।

Raghuvamśa 5,20-21.

The teacher's act was more a service to the community, propagation of learning to the utmost and only making life itself a full one worthy of living. The pupil like the affectionate master, was a devoted one reciprocating the love. Occasionally there could be a mistake of the pupil resented by the master as in the case of Yājñavalkya, the devoted pupil of Vaisampāyana. In his inordinate love for his master he wanted to effectively carry out his instructions by performing a certain expiation on his behalf all by himself, as he felt that his codisciples were not equal to the task. His master, without understanding him, got into a rage, imagining he was insulting so many of his other pupils and demanded the entire Veda he had taught him to be disgorged. Poor Yājñavalkya's remonstration assuring him of his utmost affection as the root cause of his suggestion having fallen on the deaf ears of his master, he disgorged the Veda which in turn was gathered up by the other disciples in the form of Tittiri birds at the master's behest, on account of which, it came to be known as Taittirīya Krishna Yajurveda.

As the Vedic injunction was that one should never desist from the utterance and exposition of the *Veda* by retaining it, Yājñavalkya had again to acquire this *Veda* by following the sun, speeding in his chariot, reciting it in turn anūchchāraṇa — what the sun uttered as his second master. The intonation of the *Veda* here, disturbed by the speed of his solar chariot, got slightly varied, and thus arose the

Śukla Yajurveda. A beautiful sculpture from Paṭṭaḍakal of the eighth century gives this incident as an effective visual representation. This is a unique sculpture of the early Chāļukyan school (Fig. 69).

Yājñavalkya's greatness as the preceptor of the great royal sage philosopher Janaka himself is evident in the Brihadāryanyaka Upanishad where the philosophical exposition of the ātmā to Maitreyī, his beloved and learned wife, is as meaningful an exposition as any other exposition of his in the court of Janaka himself. Yājñavalkya's importance is brought out fully by Bhavabhūti. That the Raghus could be proud in having Janaka as sambandhī is described. Here is your worthy sambandhī born of the family of the Janakas for whom Yājñavalkya the great sage himself sang the hymns of Vedic glory:

एप वः श्लाध्यसम्बन्धी जनकानां कुलोद्भवः । याज्ञवल्क्यो मुनिर्यस्मै वेदपारायणं जगौ ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,9.

in the words of Arundhati who tells Kausalyā of her good fortune in getting Janaka as her sambandhi.

There is another sculpture in the Mathura Museum (Fig. 70) where the master is shown standing with an umbrella in his hand and giving an exposition of $Vidy\bar{a}$ to his assembly of students, who humbly sit gazing at him to receive from him the knowledge that ultimately would lead them by its true understanding to the highest state of immortality—amritatva. It has been ever a prayer 'Lead me from darkness to light, from death lead me to immortality':

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योमी अमृतं गमय । विद्ययाऽमृतमञ्जूते ।

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 1,3,28.

and having mastered the learning one really reaches immortality.

The study was in all directions and in different fields. But the hightest learning was that which led to the realisation of the Supreme One enabling one to understood that the Almighty in the orb of the sun and in the individual self was one and the same which, realised, leads one to the highest bliss of immortality:

स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः । स य एवं विद् ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 2,8.

There are many examples of typical pupils and also their masters. The very pink of perfection of the qualities of a pupil who was mainly to be humble, devoted, respectful to elders and helpful to his master, is seen in Satyakāma Jābāla who studied under Gautama, and Upakosala Kamalayana who had the privilege in turn to study under Satyakāma Jābāla himself, each for twelve years. The Chāndogya Upanished gives an interesting account of the patience with which Satyakāma maintained the fires and worked for his master, tending the cows and multiplying a few hundred into a thousand. Yet, after so many years, the teacher had still to test and had not taught him the highest, even when his duty towards this devoted pupil was pointed out by his own wife, who felt that his power of endurance had been tried overmuch. The cattle he tended felt so much for him that the bull, leader of the herd, called his attention to their increased number asking him now to return to his master and himself taught him a fourth part of the highest vidyā. The fires he tended taught him similarly a fourth. The swans in the sky did another quarter, followed by the diver-bird that completed the remaining part:

अथ हैनं ऋषभोऽम्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवइति ह प्रतिशुद्भाव । प्राप्ता:, सौम्य, सहस्रं स्म:, प्रापय न आचार्यकुलम्, ब्रह्मणस्ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे, भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,5,1-2

Gautama was pleased with him so lustrous with his newly acquired knowledge learnt from others than mortals, and graciouly complying with his requet to teach him, as Vidyā learnt from the teacher was the most efficacious, completed his education by his own teachings:

तमग्निरभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुद्याव । ब्रह्मणः, सौम्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे, भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच...... तं हंस उपनिपत्याभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुद्याव । ब्रह्मणः, सौभ्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति ब्रवीतु मे भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच......तं मद्गुरुपनिपत्याभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः इति ह प्रतिशुद्याव । ब्रह्मणः, सौम्य, ते पादं ब्रवानीति । ब्रवीतु मे भगवानिति, तस्मै होवाच...... प्राप हाचार्यकुलम् । तमाचार्योऽभ्युवाद, सत्यकाम इति । भगवः, इति ह प्रतिशुद्याव । ब्रह्मविदिव वै, सौभ्य, भासि, को नु त्वानुशशासेति । अन्ये मनुष्येभ्य इति ह प्रजित्ज्ञे ।

भगवांस्त्वेव मे कामे ब्रूयात्, श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद् शेभ्यः, ग्राचर्याद्वेव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठम् प्रापतीति । तस्मै हैतदेवोवाच अत्र ह न किंचन वीयायेति, वीयायेति । Chāndogva Upanishad 4.5-9.

Upakosala Kāmalāyana similarly tended the cows and the threefold fires and devoutly served his master Satyakāma Jābāla. It is touching indeed to see how the three fires that he tended spoke to themselves with great feeling that his instruction was delayed and themselves taught him each a portion of the highest vidyā. The fires however told Upakosala that the final touches in the teaching of his education should be given by his master which he would impart soon. The first thing the master remarked after his return from a long journey was to call him endearingly and ask him how he acquired the lustre of knowledge on his face, and the pupil gave out all that happened when the master finally polished the lustre of the glowing supreme knowledge he had acquired by adding his final touches:

जपकोसलो ह वै कामलायनः सत्यकामे जावाले ब्रह्मचर्यमुवास । तस्य ह द्वादश वर्षाण्यक्षीन् परिचचार । स ह स्मान्यानन्तेवासिनः समावर्तयंस्तं ह स्मैव न समावर्तयिति । तं जायोवाच, तप्तो ब्रह्मचारी, कुशलमग्नीन्परिचचारीन्मा त्वाग्नयः परिप्रवोचन्, प्रबूह्मसमा इति । तस्मै ह अप्रोच्यैव प्रवासांचके.....अथ हाग्नयः समूदिरे, तप्तो ब्रह्मचारी, कुशलं नः पर्यचारीत् । हन्तास्मै प्रव्रवामेति । तस्मै होचुः, ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,10-14.

The other example is Āruņeya Śvetaketu, who after his first spell of stay with the chosen master, returned to his father conceited and opiniated in the complacent feeling that he had mastered all branches of learning. His father, however, put him questions he could not answer and brought him to his senses, and himself at home taught him the highest truth, so that ultimately he became very

learned. His story as a conceited pupil is given in the Chāndogya Upanishad.

श्चेतकेतुर्हारुणेय आस । तं ह पितोवाच, श्चेतकेतो, वस ब्रह्मचर्यं, न वै, सौम्य, अस्मत्कुलीनोऽनूच्य ब्रह्मबन्धुरिव भवतीति । स ह द्वादशवर्ष उपेत्य चतुविशतिवर्षः सर्वान् वेदानधीत्य महामना अनूचानमानी स्तब्ध एवाय । तं ह पितोवाच, श्चेतकेतो, यन्नु सौभ्य, इदं महामना अनूचानमानी स्तब्धोऽसि उत तमादेशमप्राक्ष्यः । येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवति, अमतं मतं, अविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति । कथं नु, भगवः, स आदेशो भवतीति.....भूय एव मा, भगवान्, विज्ञापयत्विति । तथा, सौभ्य, इति होवाच ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 6, 1 and 11.

He was along with Yājñavalkya in the pupilage of Patañchala Kāpya and later in the court of Janaka as given in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad. Though there was particularly a ban on providing pleasures and comforts to the body that would distract pupils from their studies, Śvetaketu insisted on eating honey though it was forbidden for a Brahmachārī. There are also instances of certain pupils who realised the shortcomings of their education.

Again, in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, we have the story of Śvetaketu Āruṇeya reporting to his father that what he had learned from him was not enough to answer the learned questions in philosophy put to him by the ruler Pravāhaṇa Jaivali. The father confesses he had taught him all that he knew and suggests that both of them, disregarding their higher position in society as Brāhmaṇas should immediately repair to the kidg to learn the highest knowledge as his pupils:

स होवाच, तथा नस्त्वं, तात, जानीथा, यथा यदहं कि च वेद सर्वमहं तत्तुभ्यमवोचम्, प्रेहि तु तत्र प्रतीत्य, ब्रह्मचर्यं वत्स्याव इति ।

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 6,2,4.

The Devas and Asuras and even Indra, when they went for pupilage, went humble at heart, carrying fuel in their hand as a symbol of *Brahmacharya*, steadfast studentship, by tending the fire and attending on the master, discarding the pleasures of life, and entirely devoted to studies. This was the ideal:

सिमधं, सौभ्य, आहर, उप त्वा नेष्ये।

Chāndogya Upanishad 4,4,5

तत उ ह बालािकः समित्पाणिः प्रतिचकाम उपायानीित ।

Kausītaki Upanishad 4,19.

इन्द्रो हैव देवानां ग्रभि प्रवद्राच, वैरोचनोऽसुराणां, तौ हा संविदनावेव समित्पाणि प्रजापतिसकाशमाजग्मतुः। Chāndogya Upanishad 8,7,2.

In the Gopatha Brāhmana 2.1.2, 1-9, the prerequisite of a Brahmachārī is clearly given. He should be above ego, should disregard fame, sleep, anger, pride, personal beauty and fragrance. His wearing the antelope skin would give him lustre, i.e. Brahmavarchas more than what ego could give him. His duty towards his master gives him the fame that makes him later in life a worthy master. Escape from sloth gives him agility. Overcoming anger, he becomes divine. Humble at heart, he develops the utmost purity of water. His vision turned away from feminine beauty brings him the greatest physical charm. Abstinence from the fragrance of flowers and fruit renders him fragrant. These great qualities in the Brahmachārī by a supreme effort at cultivation of character and intellect, one growing in close unison with the other, make him a worthy individul who, in turn, could inculcate in the next generation of young pupils the necessary learning, character, fortitude and everything conducive to making up the elements that build up a great nation that India has always been from the most hoary past.

Brahmacharya for svādhāya was not only for the younger folk who had to anyway master the Veda, but svādhyāya was considered so essential that it was in itself a purushārtha or the highest ideal in life. That is why we have the Vedic story of aged Bharadvāja who practised brahmacharya in three spans of human life and requested Indra for yet another, again to continue his studies of the Veda. Indra now pointed out to him that the Vedas are endless, like the three mountains in front of him, and what he had studied in three lives was only three handfuls from them, which necessitated the study of the essentials:

भरद्वाजो ह त्रिभिरायुर्भिन्नंह्यचर्यमुवास । तं ह जीणि स्थविरं णयानिमन्द्र उपन्नज्योयाच । भरद्वाज, यत्ते चतुर्थमायुर्दद्यां, किमनेन कुर्या इति । ब्रह्मचर्यमेवैनेन चरेयिमिति होबाच । तं ह त्रीन् गिरिरूपानविज्ञातानिव दर्शयांचकार । तेपामेकैकस्मान्मुप्टिमाददे । स होवाच भरद्वाजेत्यामन्त्रच । वेदा वा एते, अनन्ता वै वेदाः, एतद्वा एतैस्त्रिभिरा-युभिरन्ववोचथा:।

Tattirīya Brāhmaņa 3,10,11.

Even the great devarishi Nārada approaches the self-luminous in intelligence, the five-year old sage Sanatkumāra for furthering his vast Vedic knowledge by obtaining from him Brahmavidyā, the highest that overcomes all misery and leads to the path of bliss. But Sanatkumāra first enquires the extent of his knowledge so that he could instruct him further. Teach me, reverend Sir, addresses Nārada to Santkumāra; and the latter enquires, what is it you already know, so that I may instruct you beyond that;

अधीहि भगव:, इति होपससाद सनत्कुमारं नारदः, तं होवाच, यद्वेत्थ तेन मोपसीद, ततस्त ऊर्ध्वं वक्ष्यामीति, स होवाच। Chāndogya Upanishad 7,1,1.

Nārada replies by giving a whole list of the sacred lore studied by him. Reverend Sir, I know the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda, the epics and Purāṇas, the Veda of the Vedas, knowledge of the Manes, mathematics, portents, statecraft, logic, ethics, celestial and sacred knowledge, exorcism, warfare, astronomy, serpent lore, celestial and human arts and crafts. These I know. But reverend Sir, I know only the texts and not the comprehension of the Supreme Self. I have heard from great ones like you that one who realises the Self crosses over sorrow. I pity myself in this state, revered Sir, please help me reach the other shore of sorrow. And came the reply, whatever you have studied is only just the terminology and nothing more:

ऋग्वेदं भगवः, अध्येमि, यजुर्वेदं, सामवेदं, अथर्वणं चतुर्यं, इतिहासपुराणं पञ्चमं, वेदनां वेदं, पित्रचं, राशिं, दैवं, निधिं, वाकोवाक्यं, एकायनं, देविवद्यां, ब्रह्मविद्यां, भूतिवद्यां, क्षत्रविद्यां, सर्पदेवजनिवद्यां, एतत्, भगवः, अध्येमि । मन्त्रविदेवास्मि नात्मवित् । श्रुतं ह्ये व मे भगवद् श्रेभ्यः, तरित शोकमात्मविदिति । सोऽहं, भगवः, शोचामि, तं मा, भगवान्, शोकस्य पारं तारयित्विति । तं होवाच यद्वै कि चैतदध्यगीष्ठाः, नामैवैतत् ।

Chāndogya Upanishad 7,1,2-3.

The svādhyāya of the Veda entailed, as already seen, the study of the six angas, all of which are important for proper elucidation of the Veda and these are also attributed to rishis. In fact Yāska is asso-

ciated with Nirukta. Pāṇini is very reverently referred to by Patañjali as a great rishi who by composing the terse grammatical aphorisms created the magnificant Ashṭādhyāyī to elaborate these Sivasūtras as they are known. It is said that Naṭarāja, after his dance, sounded his drum fourteen times giving the fourteen basic sūtras. Pāṇini's Ashṭādhyāyī is based on these fundamental fourteen sūtras:

नृत्तावसाने नटराजराजो ननाद ढक्कां नवपंचवारम् । उद्धर्तुकामः सनकादिसिद्धानेतिद्वमर्शे शिवसूत्रजालम् ॥

The commentator on this great work is Patanjali. Nīlakantha Dīkshita sings his glory thus. At the feet of that great god, the entire mass of literature, well known as ancient and new, in the form of the *Vedas* and the epics, *Purāṇas*, *Smṛitis* and so on, in their entirety, gathers around and rests at it, and leisurely listening to it as the reptile anklet of that Lord, Patanjali could completely analyse it, create and explain the great science of grammar; that Lord Siva is the one and only celestial for my reckoning and I would not even utter the name of any other

प्राचीनेत्यधुनातनेति भुवने वाङ्नाम या यावती तां सर्वां परितः परीत्य चरणे यस्यायतीविश्रमम् । श्रृण्वन्नङ्गदतां गतः फणिपितः शब्दागमं व्याकरो-त्स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 18.

Patañjali is the author of the great classic Mahābhāshya about which it is said that one should either rule a great empire or study the great Mahābhāshya:

महाभाष्यं वा पठनीयं महाराज्यं वा पालनीयम्।

This same Patanjali held in the highest esteem the still earlier sage who was responsible for the Ashṭādhyāyī that contains the key to the understanding of grammar in his aphorisms on the subject. Probably the greatest intellectual feat achieved in the world of Sanskrit is this remarkable book which is indeed by a great seer sage. Patanjali gives a pen picture of how he wrote it. Bhagavān Pāṇini seated on kuśa grass facing east, in the holiest atomosphere, with kuśapavitra on his finger commenced writing his vyākaraṇasūtras with supreme effort:

प्रमाणभूत आचार्यो दर्भपवित्रपाणिः शुच्यवकाशे प्राङ्मुख उपविश्य महता प्रयत्नेन सूत्राणि प्रणयति स्म ।

Mahābhāshya 1.

It is no wonder that about such a great sage, even Patañjali, insurpassed in his grandeur in the exposition of grammer, goes into ecstasy. In fact Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjati are all the three taken as Maharishis, and every day, according to the traditional study of vyākaraṇa, the first salutation is composed of the verses that offer obeisance to the three rishis. Salutation to Pāṇini who receiving aksharasamāmnāya, the classification of the alphabet, from Śiva himself, expounded the entire science of grammar:

येनाक्षरसमाम्नायमधिगम्य महेश्वरात् । कृत्स्नं व्याकरणं प्रोक्तं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

Salutation to Pāṇini by whom the speech of man was purified by immaculate waters of vocabulary, and darkness arising from ignorance dispelled:

येन धौता गिरः पुंसां विमलैः शब्दवारिभि:। तमश्चाज्ञानजं भिन्नं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः॥

I devotedly salute the seer triad, Vararuchi the elaborator, Patanjali the commentator and Pāṇini the codifier of grammatical rules:

वाक्यकारं वररुचि भाष्यकारं पतञ्जलिम् । पाणिनि सूत्रकारं च प्रणतोऽस्मि मुनित्रयम् ॥

This is the glory of grammar in the sūtras. How often does not Pāṇini refer to the usage in the Vedas and the common usage in classical Sanskrit, the then well-understood subtle differences in all the svaras, intonation and pronunciation! He has mentioned scores of grammarians that have preceded him. The antiquity of the language, its development and growth has been in itself an amazing study.

Again Nīlakantha Dīkshita shows how even the science of music emanating from the $g\bar{a}na$ or the singing of the $S\bar{a}mas$ is already known in the Veda in such hymns as describe thier melodious note:

एतत्साम गायन्नास्ते ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,10,5.

The great authors associated with the standard works on music and dance who showed the way to understanding music itself for the mortals are the earrings of Siva, the serpents Kambala and Aśvatara. His anklet, another snake, is Patañjali, the author of the great Mahābhashya on grammar. The means of the mortal world to learn to distinguish all that is ethical from the unethical, the Veda, is only the neighing of the horses as they were transformed to be yoked to the earth chariot of Siva in his form as Tripurāntaka. That Lord is my celestial, I would not even utter the name of any other:

गान्धर्वागमदेशिकौ तनुभृतां यत्कर्णयोः कुण्डले यत्पादाङ्गदिनिर्मतं पदमहाभाष्यं धुरि स्त्यायति । पुण्यं पापमिति व्यवस्थितिरियं यद्वाहहेषाकृता स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 19.

These are also sages, Nāgas rendered into sages, that perform penance on the limbs of Siva that they decorate. The great sage Patañjali (Fig. 71) with another Vyāghrapāda (Fig. 72) the tiger-footed, whom the lord lovingly provided with tiger legs to easily climb thorny Bilva trees to gather tender shoots for his worship, have their names hallowed at Chidambaram where they eternally watch Siva's dance of bliss. Bhṛingi (Fig. 73) so ematiatied by penance as to be provided an add-tional leg by Siva is a third to these two closely associated with Naṭarāja.

Music and dance were not considered outside the pale of holy learning. Even Kāma or love, the entire science of eroticism was written by a rishi Vātsyāyana. Nārada (Fig, 22) and Tumburu are the two great divine musicians well-versed in the play of the vīṇā the noblest musical instrument, बीणा हि नामासमुद्रोत्थितं रत्नम् as given in Mrichchhakaṭika. In the description of Samudragupta in his Allāhābād inscription he is supposed to have put to shame even the divine ministrels Tumburu and Nārada:

निणितविदग्धमितगान्धर्वलिलतैब्रीडितत्रिदशपतिगुरुतुम्बुरुनारदादेः

Corp. Inscr. Ind. 3,8.

Kālidāsa himself draws attention to the proficiency of Nārada on the

vīṇā with which he was proceeding towards Gokarṇa on the South-Western sea to offer musical worship to Siva:

अथ रोधिस दक्षिणोदधे: श्रितगोकर्णनिकेतमीश्वरम्। उपवीणयित्ं ययौ रवेरुदगावृत्तिपथेन नारदः॥

Raghuvamśa 8,33.

Nārada is one of the divine *rishis*, a *Devarishi*. Five *Devarishis* are well known. The first is Nārada, the other is Tumburu who is also proficient on the $v\bar{\imath}n\bar{\alpha}$, and probably associated with another variety of musical instrument from which the present Tamburā as it is called is derived. He is horse-faced. Parvata is another divine sage and Devala yet another. Bharata, the famous author of $N\bar{a}tys\bar{a}stra$, is another of this celestial group of sages.

The glory of Nātyaśāstra lies in the fact that when Brahmā created it by taking pāthya or the text from the Rigveda, gāna or music from the Sāmaveda, provoga or use from Yajurveda and bhāva or flavour from the Atharvaveda, he created a new science of dance which could best be elaborated and illustrated in its nuances by the Apsarasas. Like Nārāyana who made Viśvakarmā spread the knowledge of chitra as given in the Chitrasūtra, Brahmā gave this task of exposition of Nātva to Bharata, the great sage who spread its knowledge in the world. There are two beautiful sculptures at Mahābalipuram to illustrate Siva himself lovingly teaching the naunces of dance. With the right palm on his mouth in great reverence and somewhat bent in humility. Bharata listens to Siva as he gives him lessons on nātva, of which as Natarāja he is the lord of teachers (Fig. 74). Nātya Dakshināmūrti Šiva is very fond of dance. Vigorous dance, tāndava, the opposite of soft dance, lāsya, Siva taught to Tandu; and the sage Tandu did it so well that this mode of dance itself with its powerful strides which are shown being practised by Tandu in the presence of Siva himself with his foot lifted to be brought down with a thud, assumed the name tandava (Fig. 75). These sculptures on the Dharmarājaratha of the time of Pallava Narasimhavarman I of the middle of the seventh century are very important for illustrating the enthusiasm of not only the highest celestial, Siva, in teaching these modes of dance but even that of the great rishis who learnt them with a zest. Bharata's Nātyaśāstra is a classical work and it is achieved

by a rishi, Music and dance as given in the Chitrasūtra have a greater appeal as an offering to the deity than even worship in other forms. They are mokshasādhanas achieved:

कलानां प्रवरं चित्रं धर्मकामार्थमोक्षदम्।

Chitra also shares moksha in the same way as nāṭya and saṅgīta when the dancer and the musician could have the highest bliss by invoking the Almighty by his offer of rhythm and melody:

गीतज्ञो यदि गीतेन नाप्नोति परमं पदम् । देवस्यानुचरो भृत्वा तेनैव सह मोदते ॥

Vishnudharmottara 3,18,7.

Similarly nātya is also a means of salvation. It is higher than even the offering of flowers, fruit and other offerings:

पुष्पनैवेद्यदानेभ्यो नृत्तदानं विशिष्यते। देवताराधनं कुर्याद्यस्तु धर्मेण नृत्तवित्।। स सर्वकामानाप्नोति मोक्षोपायं च विन्दति॥

Vishnudharmottara 3,34,35-39.

That is why in the Śivānandalaharī Śankara pours forth his heart in his offering of a song as a posy of literary flowers obtained through the grace of the Mother of the Universe and again in turn offered to her:

त्वदीयाभिर्वाग्भिस्तव जननि वाचां नुतिरियम्।।

Saundaryalaharī

Bharata, the exponent of dance is wonderfully described in the Uttararāmacharita as always in touch with the Apsarasas whom he could well invite to perform any new creation of a drama like the one prepared by Vālmīki. As a sage he is very simple and lives in a hermitage like any of the others whose mind is only diverted towards the Almighty in the form of satya or tapas. Bharata's hermitage is not very far from Vālmīki's, and in fact Vālmīki who had created a new drama unknown yet to the world and to be first made available in a performance by the Apsarasas at the sacrifice of the aśvamedha of Rāma, is referred to by Lava, when he tells Janaka, Arundhatī and Kausalyā that his elder brother Kuśa had accompanied the brahmachārī disciples of Vālmīki who had sent the manuscript of the drama

he had composed giving the later story of Sītā after her abandonment by Lakshmaṇa near his hermitage, the birth of the twins and the rest, of which no one had any idea and which was for the first time to be witnessed enacted by celestial nymphs.

Lava: This further portion of the story has not been heard by us or any other.

Janaka: Has not the poet composed it?

Lava: He has composed it but it has not been staged. A portion of it with an episode in it deep in its emotional grace made fit for enactment was written in his own hand by the reverend sage and sent to the revered seer Bharata, the author of the science of dance and music.

Janaka: Why?

Lava: Because the revered Bharata would get it enacted through the celestial nymphs.

Janaka: This is indeed striking wonder in us.

Lava: The enthusiasm of the revered Vālmīki is very great in this. Therefore he has sent it personally through his own disciples who have personally carried it carefully in their hand to reach the hermitage of Bharata and give it to him. As a guard for protecting them and to avoid any interruption my revered brother bow in hand has been sent.

लवः - नायं कथाप्रविभागोऽस्माभिरन्येन वा श्रुतपूर्वः।

जनकः — किं न प्रणीत एव कविना ?

लवः प्रणीतो न प्रकाशितः । तस्यैव कोऽप्येकदेशः सन्दर्भान्तरेण रसवानभिनयार्थः कृतः । तं च स्वहस्तलिखितं मुनिर्भगवान् व्यसृजद्भगवतो भरतस्य मुनेस्तौ-र्यत्रिकसूत्रकारस्य ।

जनक: -- किमर्थम् ?

लवः स किल भगवान् भरतस्तमप्सरोभिः प्रयोजयिष्यतीति ।

जनकः -- सर्वमिदमाकूतकरमस्माकम्।

लवः महती पुनस्तिस्सिन्भगवतो वाल्मीकेरास्था। यतः केषां चिदन्तेवासिनां हस्तेन तत्पुस्तकं भरताश्रमं प्रति प्रेषितम्। तेषामनुयात्रिकश्चापपाणिः प्रमादापनोदार्थ-मस्मद्भाता प्रेषितः। *Uttararāmacharita* 4. From this it is clear that Bharata is equally a great mumukshu muni or one striving for liberation as a sage but in a different way.

Vātsyāyana, the author of Kāmasūtra, is not just any one but a great rishi of the Vatsa family, the family of the Bhrigus. We should recall here that Bhagavān has in the Gītā clearly given that he is himself Kāma but unopposed to dharma:

धर्मविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षम ।

Bhagavadgītā 7,11.

So also, for jyotisha as well, it is rishis who have been at the root of understanding the greatest astronomical factors which are so important in the proper comprehension of the text of the Veda itself. When we remember that Balgangadhar Tilak could establish the date of the Veda by his knowledge of astronomy, it becomes very clear how prodigious knowledge of astronomy is essential for the appropriate understanding of the Veda, and Jyotisha is one of the shadangas. It is rishis who are authors of every one of the angas. Thus svādhyāya does not merely apply to the study of the intonation of the Veda and understanding the connotion of the text only but aided fully by other studies. Nārada when he enumerates all that he has studied to Sanatkumara, mentions so many vidyās and it is a wide range that is covered.

But the most laconic and mystifying lesson of monosyllables heard in the peals of thunder and understood differently by three different categories of listeners as the Almighty's teaching through the voice of nature are dāna, dama and dāyā that are essential particularly for the devas, manushyas and asuras as given in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad:

तदेतदेवैष देवी वागनुबदित स्तनियत्नुदं द द इति दम्यत, दत्त, दयध्विमिति ।

Bṛihadāraṇyakaupanishad 5,2,3.

emphasising for the gods particularly to turn their mind from enjoyment to restraint, the minds of the men from thought of the self to selflessness and sacrifice, and the asuras whose natural propensity is cruelty to kindness. These were factors that determined even the study of the secular sciences and arts. The fine arts themselves were

rendered pure, unsullied, heavenly and holy as an offering to god and learnt in that spirit. Dance, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, everything was in this spirit so that in this was a wide range of scholarship characterised as heavenly and sweet and as the very essence leading to the Almighty.

Among the purushārthas, It is not only kāma for which sage Vātsyāyana had prepared a masterly work, the Kāmasūtra, but artha has also the highest significance. Vasishṭha himself asks Rāma to accumulte wealth as a means of helping any right cause and for promoting dharma.

घनमार्जय काकुत्स्थ घनमूलिमदं जगत्

Brihaspati is reputed as the author of the highest book on Arthaśāstra. There have been several others, all of them sages, prominent among them Brihaspati (Fig. 76) who had written on this subject, and the great authoritative work of the fourth country B.C. during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya is by another sage a nūtana or a comparatively new one, Kautilya, who wrote that most masterly treatise, the best, known as Arthaśāstra which is the source book for understanding of ancient Indian culture. He quotes so many authors as beacons of light that preceded him in this subject. The saintly and simple life of Chanaka, who could in the most easy manner bring about the downfall of the Nandas, put Chandragupta on the throne and make him an emperor and could get Rākshasa, so devoted to the memory of the Nandas, ultimately to be the minister of Chandragupta himself, anxious to be away from the crowded atmosphere of the city in a tapovana, is very clear tn the remark of the Chamberlain in the Mudrārākshasa. Rightly the Chamberlain remarks, Oh! wonderful indeed is the glorious prosperity of the prime minister of the king of the kings, the emperor:

अहो महाराजाधिराजस्य प्रथमामात्यस्य विभूतिः।

Mudrārākshasa 3.

He describes his dwelling in all its grandeur again with its surroundings. There are simple-clad brahmachārī boys that learn the Veda from him and the cottage itself with its thatched roof half bent down and with a creeper of gourd crawling upon it, with stones here and

there lying for crushing cowdung cakes for the daily homa sacrifice, is indeed the true life of the simplest Brahmavādin that this seer really was. Personally his life was pure and simple, where wealth or glamour had no place:

उपलशकलमेतद्भेदकं गोमयानां विनिमितपटलान्तं दृश्यते जीर्णकुडचम् ।

Mudrārākshasa 3,15.

This is the great author of the Arthaśāstra.

For Dharmaśāstra, so many sages have contributed and very freely. We cannot feel sufficiently grateful to Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. P.V. Kane for having written the magnificent volumes of Dharmaśāstra literature which is vast and ocean-like. It is rishis like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vasishṭha, Parāśara, Śankhalikhita, Nārada and others who have written so much on dharmaśāstra in the form of Smritis. Purely domestic samskāras and their ritual has also been elaborated in the Grihyasūtras like those of rishis again like Āpastamba, Bodhāyana and others.

The *rishi* was the source of the text of the *dharmaśāstra* and also of the correct interpretation. He was best fitted from time to time to give such advice even to the greatest and the most righteous rulers that India ever had. The *rishis* dedicated themselves purely to the path of virtue and anything crossing that they resented, expected nothing from anyone but were happy to give away all that they had, and were fearless enough to pronounce their judgement on the acts of even the celestials themselves. Sometimes in a rage, like Durvāsa, they could curse even the celestials, or irritated, pronounce a curse though they would immediately with their heart soft as butter almost recall their curse.

The classical instance of dharma being taught to the very enforcer of dharma, Dharmarāja or Yama, is given in the episode of Aṇī Māṇḍavya, a great sage in meditation in his hermitage, who was impaled by a grave error of judgement. When the king discovered it he went and fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven which was readily done. And now Aṇī Māṇḍavya went to the abode of Yama Dharmarāja who was the repository of all knowledge of

dharma to mete out reward or punishment for meritorious or sinning souls, and enquired of him how he had caused him to be impaled when he was innocent. The Lord of Death replied by mentioning how when he was a child he had thrust thorns in the tails of bumblebees and, as merit had its reward a thousandfold, even evil had its effect multifold which was the reason for his suffering. Anī Mānḍavya immediately retorted that he did not know the simple fact that an innocent child doing anything unknowingly could gather no effect of sin as it should have been guided by elders. The undeserved punishment meted out to him was unjust. Hence he cursed Yama to be born in a lowly womb on earth as a mortal. That is the birth of Vidura from a maid servant of the palace of Vichitravīrya, though as Dharmarāja himself born, he possessed immense knowledge of dharma and no one could expound the ethical principles as Vidura. Viduranīti is itself the quintesscence of dharma.

It is again rishis that have shown the path of bhakti. Nārada's Bhaktisūtras are very well known and Śāṇḍilya was also a great rishi that showed the path of devotion like Śuka whose ambrosial exposition is the greatest devotional book Śrīmad Bhāgavata. For moksha the pathway is in the parā vidyā of the Upanishads for which Śankara has contributed not a little through his bhāshyas, most valuable commentaries. The study has been so great and popular that as recently as in the seventeenth century, the finest twin commentaries on both the Brahmasūtras and Yogasūtras have been written in the sweetest language and the simplest by one of the greatest ascetics that had realised the Absolute and was an avadhūta, Sadāśiva Brahmendra. The tradition of rishis is thus all embracing in its cultural and spiritual value.

कि नु तद्दूष्कृतं कर्म मया कृतमजानता।
यस्येयं फलनिवृं त्तिरीदृश्यासादिता मया।
पतिङ्गकानां पुच्छेषु त्वयेषीका प्रवेशिता।
कर्मणस्तस्य ते पाप्तं फलमेतत्तपोधन।।
स्वल्पमेव यथा दत्तं दानं बहुगुणं भवेत्।
अधर्म एवं विप्रषे बहुदुःखफलप्रदः।।
कस्मिन्काले मया तत्तु कृतं ब्रूहि यथातथम्।
तेनोक्तो धर्मराजेन बालभावे त्वया कृतम्।।

वालो हि द्वादशाद्वर्षाज्जन्मतो यत्करिष्यित ।

न भविष्यत्यधर्मोत्र न प्रज्ञास्यन्ति वै दिशः ।।

अल्पेऽपराधेऽपि महान्मम दण्डस्त्वया कृतः ।

गरीयान् ब्राह्मणवधः सर्वभूतवधादिप ।।

शूद्रयोनावतो धर्म मानुषः सम्भविष्यित ।

मर्यादां स्थापयाम्यद्य लोके धर्मफलोदयम् ।।

आ चतुर्दशकाद्वर्षात्र भविष्यित पातकम् ।

परतः कुर्वतामेवं दोष एव भविष्यित ॥

एतेन त्वपराधेन शापात्तस्य महात्मनः ।

धर्मो विदुररूपेण शुद्रयोनावजायत ।।

धर्मो चार्थे च कुशलो लोभकोधविवर्जितः ।

दीर्घदर्शी शमपरः कुरूणां च हिते रतः ।।

Mahābhārata 1,107,9-19.

The idea underlying the gleaning of wisdom from the various branches of knowledge has been of such great importance in the mind, that the annual upākarma which is, at it were, the Indian convocation and the inauguration of studies, shows every one in the village or town gathered en masse every year, starting with a determination to study; and on that day, after the māhsankalpa, or the great determination of a life of study there is a little of every science, at least the first few lines, including the Vedas and Vadāngas repeated in token of having begun all the the studies, with an idea of continuing and studying further and further throughout the year. This impressive ceremony, itself an annual function even today, has been so very much in the mind of the Indian even in distant lands, where he had gone to stay, that he could still think in these terms. We can observe in the panels adorning the Barabudur stupa, a sculpture depicting the beginning of the studies of a Bodhisattva from an Avadana story, the youth seated amidst a row of students assembled, with their hands in the attitude of sankalpa or determination to study in the presence of a teacher who is shown on a slightly elevated seat (Fig. 77).

In the village itself, the temple as may be gathered from inscriptions, was a great centre of learning and in several inscriptions we learn how provision was made for the feeding and maintaining of teachers and students. The various subjects taught are also specifically mentioned as for instance, the study

of Pūrvamīmāmsā styled as Prābhākaram in the inscriptions, for which we learn provision was made in the temple of Nagesvarasvami at Kumbakonam, at Tiruvottiyur, at Ennäyiram and several other places. The inscriptions from Tiruvottiyur and Tirumukkūdal give a glowing account of an educational institution maintained by the temple. In the latter, we have also an elaborate description of a hospital attached to the temple and in the former we have the number of students, the subjects taught and other details. Along with the temples and agrahāras and ghatikās there must be reckoned for the dissemination of knowledge the mathas which grew in power and popularity under the Chola and Pandya kings and were important as centres of educational activity through the endowments made for the purpose by the arrangement for the reading and expounding of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata and the Purānas. An inscription from Tiruttängal in Ramanāthapuram district mentions Mahābhāratavritti registering a gift of land for the expounding, of the Mahābhārata for public benefit. The Anuśasanaparva and Śantiparva, portions of the Udyogaparva and Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata and selections from the purānas like the Vishnupurāna, Harivamsa or Vāyupurana and portions from the Rāmāyana meant so much of ethical knowledge imparted through the ear, that the name sruta for learning was rendered appropriate. It is not merely literacy that meant anything in India: it is knowledge and knowledge of dharma and an ethical mode of living which was in itself a part of penance. It led the grihastha on from brahmacharya to vānaprastha, where rishis mainly revelled, finally leading on, if necessary, to sanyāsa, which was not vouchsafed for all, unless there was that absolute and complete renunciation of every human aspect and delight only in the Supreme Being.

The *rishis* are the very embodiment of simplicity. Generally marriages and intellectual discussions are among the equally matched:

विवाहश्च विवादश्च समयोरेव रोचते

Kanva as a sage had no treasures except the treasure of penance of which he had abundance. In fact, a sage in spite of his glory, lustre, and importance by his self control (indriyanigraha), and truth (satya) was averse to worldly pleasures. He neither ploughed nor reaped, only gleaned and gathered such grain as fell by themselves as they grew and

ripened and got scattered here and there on the sandy banks of the river near the hermitage. Even out of it, truthfully and conscientiously, whether the state wanted it or not, the *rishis* delivered one sixth of their coarse grain as their part of the tribute and tax due to the king:

तान्युञ्छपष्ठाङ्कितसैकतानि शिवानि वस्तीर्थजलानि किच्चत् ॥

Raghuvamsa 5,8.

When sending Sakuntalā to her royal home in Dushyanta's palace, to be reached there by his disciples, Sāradvata and Sārngarava, sage Kaṇva sends his message through them. He calls Sārngarava to give the king this message of his regarding Sakuntalā. Consider us well with honour whose only wealth is penance and also your own eminent lineage that commands wealth and position as a king and the overflowing affection of this girl to you not brought about by kinsmen. You have to treat her with due consideration equal to the rest of your consorts. The rest depends on destiny. Indeed the kinsmen of the wife cannot say further more in this:

शार्ङरव ! इति त्वया मद्दचनात्स राजा शकुन्तलां पुरस्कृत्य वक्तव्यः अस्मान् साघु विचिन्त्य संयमधनानुच्चैः कुंल चात्मनः त्वय्यस्याः कथमप्यवान्धवकृतं स्नेहप्रवृत्ति च तम् । सामान्यप्रतिपत्तिपूर्वकिमयं दारेषु दृश्या त्वयाः भाग्यायत्तमतः परं न खकु तद्वाच्यं वघूवन्धुभिः ।।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4.17.

Bhartrihari has put it in an even more telling manner in comparing a rishi and a ruler. We are satisfied here with the simplest bark garments and you through the softest silken robes. Satisfaction for both of us is the same, and there is no difference in it at all. It is he whose desires are expansive that becomes indigent. When the mind is satisfied who is the opulent and who the begger:

वयिमह परितुष्ठा वल्कलैस्त्वं दुकूलैः सम इह परितोषो निर्विशेषो विशेषः। स तु भवति दरिद्रो यस्य तृष्णा विशाला मनसि च परितुष्टे कोऽर्थवान् को दरिद्रः।।

Vāirāgyasataka 49.

Lakshmī is as it were prayed to by the sage to leave him alone.

There are others that long for prosperity whom she should favour. She is not the desired one for the sages that subsist on parched rice grain obtained by alms in a cup of fresh green leaves rendered holy:

मातर्लंक्ष्मि भजस्व कंचिदपरं मत्कांक्षिणी मा समभू-भोंगेभ्यः स्पृह्यालवो न हि वयं का नि:स्पृहाणामसि । सद्यः स्यूतपलाशपत्रपुटिकापत्रे पवित्रीकृते भिक्षासक्त् भिरेव संप्रति वयं वृत्ति समीहामहे ॥

Vairāgyaśataka 62

It is in this spirit that Kuchela, the great muni, evident from his very dress tattered and torn that he has no need for any enjoyment in life, was content with practically nothing for subsistence except the joy of concentration and meditation on the Supreme One. His earlier name was Sudāma when he was a co-pupil along with Krishna under Sandipani. Krishna was at the height of his glory, and a wish from him would have meant his becoming fabulously rich. But Sudāma's only pleasure lay in penance and meditation. He was a true householder, grihastha, and discharged his functions as such, and his wife, meticulously and to the extent that she could in her dire poverty, did all that she could do to help her husband follow the path of virtue. His children were not merely ill-fed but starved. As a mother she could not bear the sight of starving children, though she did not mind her own starving and her husband's who chose it as a pleasure. A beautiful Kangra painting shows the tumbled down hut of Kuchela and his tattered clothes (Fil. 78) He is shown conversing with his wife, exasperated beyond all endurance. She prayed of her husband just to meet his old classmate and friend not for riches but to just relieve her little children of their suffering from hunger. Sudāma, daily importuned like this, and realising also the duty he owed to the children, at last agreed. As anyone meeting another should take an upayana or a small offering, and as he had nothing that he could offer, obtained with great difficulty some gleaned rice by kapotavriti (as a pigeon pecks grain), which his wife could just heat up into parched rice, with which bundled in a small tatter and safely tucked under his arm, he started for Dwaraka. How shy he felt and how humiliated to meet his noble friend for what he considered an ignoble act of begging however small the requirement could be! Krishna overjoyed, received him, unlike Drupada his old

friend Drona, with an expression of supreme joy, his own queen Rukminī attending on them both with reverence. Krishna washed his feet, welcomed him, with a seat and when he was comfortably settled, enquired of his welfare. What could the sage utter except that he was getting on well. He felt so ashamed that he could not even offer the parched rice. Krshna himself jokingly asked for what he had brought him and, as he felt so shy, he pulled it out and lovingly from that tatter he ate a handful and repeated it. So pleased was he that as the Supreme One he knew his requirements and though untold he mentally wished and showered on him his benevolence. Sudāma, unaccustomed to begging and always accustomed to contentment and starvation, delighting only in penance, returned without a word, with the supreme joy of having seen his friend and, when he reached his hermitage, lo and behold! where was it! A mansion stood in it stead. Rightly can Venkatanātha, the great poet of the fourteenth century, say in his characteristic manner that he would not stoop to utter flattering praise of rulers who thought so high of their statecraft with an overweaning pride in their capacity to rule a kingdom that was just a small speck in a corner of a continent, part of the expanse of the earth, itself a dot in the universe; if necessary he would certainly beg of that great Celestial who in his great mercy vouchsafed the prosperity of the lord of riches itself to the sage Kuchela of ragged garment for his having offered him a handful of parched rice:

> क्षोणीकोणशतांशपालनकलादुर्वारगर्वानिल-क्षुभ्यत्क्षुद्रनरेन्द्रचाटुरचनां घन्यां न मन्यामहे। देवं सेवितुमेव निश्चिनुमहे योऽसौ दयालुः पुरा धानामुष्टिमुचे कुचेलमुनये दत्ते स्म वित्तेशताम्॥

> > Vairāgyapañchaka

In this context it is interesting to see a very telling picture from Trichur painted by a late Kerala painter in the eighteenth century which shows Krishna lovingly receiving Kuchela and conversing with him after making him feel comfortable on a couch in his palace (Fig. 79)

What is pleasure and enjoyment to the worldly is a thorn to be avoided for sages who love only the company of the innocent and live a life of abstinence. The court hall of Dushyanta is almost allergic to both the disciples of Kanva, the hermit boys accustomed to simple life in a hermitage with no sophisticated crowd. It is like a house on fire in contrast as Śārngarava expresses:

तथापीदं शक्वत्परिचितविविक्तेन मनसा जनाकीणं मन्ये हुतवहपरीतं गृहमिव।।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 5,10.

Śāradvata not only readily falls in with his opinion but is stronger in his aversion not only to city life but also to the attitude of those imagining they are so happy in their enjoyment of pleasures, and views them as oilsmeared in the eyes of one fresh after a bath, the dirty ones viewed by the clean, the drowsy as seen by the wakeful, the fettered by the free-moving one:

> स्थाने खलु भवान् पुरप्रवेशादित्थं भूतः। अहमप्यभ्यक्तमिव स्नातः शुचिरशुचिमिव प्रबुद्ध इव सुप्तम्। बद्धभिव स्वैरगतिर्जनमिह सुखसङ्गिनमवैमि।। Abhijñānaśakuntalam 5,11.

Even an idea of some of the most common animals in the town is absent in many of the hermit boys in the forest who had never an occasion to see them. Such is their simplicity. In the Uttararāmacharita it certainly provokes a smile to see that the horse creates a wonder in the minds of the hermit boys, the companions of Kuśa and Lava. As Lava is conversing with Janaka, bewildered brahmachārī boys rush on the scene and exclaim to their friend. Friend! we have heard the mention of an animal known as a horse in the countryside, but we have seen the beast with our own eyes only just now. Lava smiles and replies, though he had also never seen a horse before, that it is mentioned in treatises on animals and on warfare, and now asks them to describe how it looks. The boys enthusiastically picture it as having a long tail that it constantly waves, has a long neck and four hoofs, grazes on grass and sheds balls of dung of the size of a mango. Why a lengthy description? He is moving about great distances. Come along, we will go and see it:

संभ्रान्तवटव:—कुमार ! कुमार ! अश्वोऽश्व इति कोऽपि भूतविशेषो जनपदेष्वनुश्रूयते । सोऽयमधुनास्मद्भि: प्रत्यक्षीकृतः । लवः — अश्व इति पशुसमाम्नाये सांग्रामिके च पठचते । तद्बूत कीदृशः । वटवः—श्रूयतां

पश्चात्पुच्छं वहित विपुलं तच्च धूनोत्यजसं दीर्धग्रीवः स भवित खुरास्तस्य चत्वार एव । शष्पाण्यत्ति प्रकिरित शकृत्पिण्डकानास्रमात्रान् किं वाऽऽस्यातैर्वजिति स पुनर्द्रसेह्यहि यामः ॥

Uttararāmacharita 4,26.

We can in this context understand that most hermit children probably had not even seen a cow because this was also a rare animal except in some fortunate hermitages like that of Vasishtha or Jamadagni. We know of the story of Upamanyu, son of Vyāghrapāda, whose mother, unable to give the child milk, deplores how they could have a cow to supply milk in the poor hermitages of sages! Nīlakaṇtha Dīkshita describes the magnanimity of Siva to Upamanyu. That great God is my deity, no other shall I even mention by name, the God who gave to a little known hapless Brāhmaṇa child that was just requesting a little milk to drink, which he could not get, and to whom Siva, the very embodiment of the essence of compassion, gave an entire ocean of milk, fortune galore, the Kalpavriksha itself that yields all desires, ambrosia and the great Chintāmaṇi gem which is a panacea for all ills:

कस्मै चिद्विजबन्धवे कियदिष क्षीरं पुरा याचते दत्तो येन दयारसैकवपुषा दुग्धोद एवार्णवः। श्रीश्रीबल्लभकल्पपादपसुधाचिन्तामणीभिः समं स स्वामी मम दैवपं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते॥

Śivotkarshamañjarī 10.

The story is elaborately given in the Mahābhārata. Vyāghrapāda, the great devotee of Śiva Naṭarāja, was all the time engaged in adoring the Lord with Bilva leaves carefully gathered by him and had no time to attend to domestic requirements. The child had earlier once or twice partaken of milk and knew what it was. Both he and his younger brother Dhaumya were playing, saw a cow being milked somewhere in a hermitage, and having tasted of it, liked it immensely. Being a little boy he ran to his mother and asked her for food mixed in milk. The mother mixed some rice powder in water and gave it for the child. The boy in juvenile spirit told his mother that it was not

at all milk. This immediately made the mother so sad, and because of her attachment to the child, embraced him, smelt his curls of hair and tried to explain gently to him, how for them, sages engaged in penance, living in the forest and subsisting on roots and fruits, there could not be available milkfood, beyond their reach, and that Siva was their only refuge. The child immediately innocently enquired who Siva Mahādeva was, how he looked and how he could bestow his grace. Learning from her how he could contemplate on him, he so meditated, that Siva, pleased, appeared and addressed him 'Child Upamanyu! I am so pleased with you, look at me. You are a sage already and you are a great devotee and I have understood you as a Brahmarishi in the making. You will have eternal youth and lustre. An ocean of milk will be there for you wherever you want it. You can enjoy this with all your friends and relatives for years and finally you will have bliss by attaining me:

व्याध्रपाद इति स्यातो वेदवेदाङ्गपारगः। तस्याहमभवं पुत्रो धौम्यश्चापि ममानुजः॥ कस्य चित्वथ कालस्य घौम्येन सह माघव। अगच्छमाश्रमं क्रीडन्मूनीनां भावितात्मनाम ॥ तत्रापि च मया दृष्टा दुह्यमाना पयस्विनी। लक्षितं च मया क्षीरं स्वदुतोप्यमृतोपमम्।। ततोऽहमब्रंव वाल्याज्जननीमेत्य नस्तथा। क्षीरोदनसमायुक्तं भोजनं हि प्रयच्छ मे॥ अभावाच्चैव दुग्धस्य दुःखिता जननी तदा। ततः पिष्टं समालोडच तोयेन सह माघव ॥ आवयोः क्षीरिमत्येव पानार्थं समुपानयत ।.... ततोंऽहमब्रवं बाल्याज्जननीमात्मनस्तदा। नेदं क्षीरोदनं मातर्यत्त्वं मे दत्तवत्यसि ॥ ततो मामब्रवीन्माता दःखशोकसमन्विता। पुत्रस्रे हात्परिष्वज्य मूर्घिन चान्नाय माघव।। कृतः क्षीरोदनं वत्स मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् । वने निवसतां नित्यं कन्दमूलफलाशिनाम् ॥ तपसा जपनित्यानां शिवो नः परमा गतिः। कोऽयमम्ब महादेवः स कथं च प्रसीदति।।.... वत्सोपमन्यो तृष्टोऽस्मि पश्य मां मृनिपूज्जव । दढभक्तोऽसि विप्रर्षे मया जिज्ञासितो ह्यसि ॥

अक्षयं यौवनं तेऽस्तु तेजश्चैवानलोपमम् । क्षीरोदः सागरश्चैव यत्र यत्रेच्छिसि प्रियम् ॥ तत्र ते भविता कामं सान्निघ्यं पयसो निघेः । क्षीरोदनं च भुंक्ष्व त्वमभृतेन समन्वितम् ॥ बन्धुभिः सहितः कल्पं ततो मामुपयास्यसि ।

Mahābhārata 13,14,112-117, 120-123,126,130,339,358-360.

From this it clear that the simplicity of the hermit went to that extent that there were many boys who had not even seen a cow. It is no wonder that Drona who was so poor approached his friend and co-pupil Drupada to give him a cow to feed his only little child Aśvatthāmā.

The rishis, so simple and neglectful of even their bare necesities, may not have had that much for the satisfaction of their hunger even from day to day, but still with a heart so full of love, overflowing with kindness, welcomed guests and shared with them whatever they had. That is why Manu has said, the humblet can still cool the heart of the guests arrived. A few blades of grass as a seat or even the prepared ground itself in the hermitage which is just cleansed and purified by a smear of cowdung, cool water, and the last and most important item, sweet words of welcome, these never fail in the homes of the good:

तृणानि भूमिरुदकं वाक् चतुर्थी च सूनृता। एतान्यपि सतां गेहे नोच्छिद्यन्ते कदाचन।।

Mamusmriti

In the Taittiriya it has been clearly stated thus. Never delay or deny hospitality to any. This shall be the rule. Hence, by every possible means, enough food should be acquired. In fact food is prepared for the guests as they say. Food offered first to the guest begets for the giver himself the best first. If the food is given secondly to the guest, the giver also gets it so. When the guest is offered last the giver also gets it last. This is as much as to to say that depending on the joy and eagerness for giving the food to the guest vaxes prosperity in food for the giver himself:

न कं चन वसतौ प्रत्याचक्षीत । तद् व्रतम् । तस्माद्यया कया चन विधया बह्वन्नं प्राप्नुयात् । अराध्यस्मा अन्नमित्याचक्षते । एतद्वे मुखतोऽन्नं राद्धम् । मुखतोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।
एतद्वं मध्यतोऽन्नं राद्धम् । मध्यतोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।
एतद्वा अन्ततोऽन्नं राद्धम् । अन्ततोऽस्मा अन्नं राध्यते ।

Taittirīya Upanishad 3,10,1.

The love and affection of the sage is almost proverbial. It is evident from the story in the \$\overline{A}diparva\$ of the \$Mahabharata\$ where Paushya without realising that the food given by him to Uttanka was cooked by a woman with unbound hair, a hair being found in it, could anger Uttanka like the true \$Brahmana\$ sage he was to curse him to be blind. Without looking into the food, the king retaliated by cursing him to go without progeny. The moment it was pointed out to him that Uttanka was right, he regretted his action and addressed him, Oh reverend Sir! unknowingly this polluted food has been given to you; grace me by withdrawing your curse and save me from becoming blind. Immediately Uttanka retracted his curse and assured him that his blindness would be momentary and he would regain his sight. But similarly asked by him, Paushya being a *Kshatriya*, though convince of having cursed him without reason for it, would not recall his curse, as he still felt his ire had not cooled:

न मृषा ब्रमीमि। भूत्वा त्वमन्घो न चिरादनन्घो भविष्यसीति।
ममापि शापो भवता दत्तो न भवेदिति। तं पौष्यः प्रत्युवाच।
न चाहं शक्तः शापं प्रत्यादातुम्। न हि मे मन्युरुपशमं गच्छति।
कि चैतद्भवता न ज्ञायते यथा।
नवनीतं हृदयं ब्राह्मणस्य वाचि क्षुरो निहितः।
तदुभयमेतद्विपरीतं क्षत्रियस्य वाङनवनीतं हृदयं तीक्ष्णघारम्।।

Mahābhārata 1,3,121-123.

He explains it further by expatiating that the heart of a *Brāhmaṇa* is soft like butter but the tongue as a razor with sharp edge. Both these are differerent in the case of a *Kshatriya* whose utterance is sweet like butter, but the heart razor sharp.

Instances abound in literature. We can take the case of the celestial nymph Harinī who was born Indumatī the queen of Aja. Vasishṭha, in his message assuaging the grief of Aja, gives the episode of the sage Tṛiṇabindu who performed such severe penace, that in sheer fear of it Indra sent the nymph Harinī to disturb his meditation.

By the anger that arose from the impediment eaused to his contemplation, the disturbed sage, like the tempestuous wave of the deluge, cursed her to be born a mortal on earth, even as she was brandishing her alluring charm in his presence. But, when she begged of him to forgive her for an act she could not avoid as in the entourage of the lord of the celestials, the kind-hearted one made her earthly existence limited to the time she could see a celestial flower. Thus having been born in the royal family of the Krathakaisikas and having been so long your queen, she has now regained the heaven she lost by the very cause that put an end to her curse:

चरतः किल दुश्चरं तपस्तृणविंदोः परिशङ्कितः पुरा।
प्रजिघाय समाधिभोदिनीं हिरिरस्मै हिरिणीं सुराङ्गनाम्।।
स तपःप्रतिबन्धमन्युना प्रमुखाविष्कृतचारुविश्रमाम्।
अशपद्भव मानुपीति तां शमवेलाप्रलयोमिणा मुनिः।।
भगवन् परवानयं जनः प्रतिकृलाचरितं क्षमस्व मे।
इति चोपनतां क्षितिस्पृशं कृतवाना सुरपुष्पदर्शनात्।।
ऋथकैशिकवंशसम्भवा तव भूत्वा महिषी चिराय सा।
उपलब्धवती दिवश्रच्युतं विवशा शापनिवृत्तिकारणम्।।

Raghuvamśa 8,79-82.

Another instance is of the sage Matanga who cursed Priyamvada. Assuming his original celestial form from that of the elephant that was slightly hit by Aja by an arrow, Priyamvada told him that he was the son of the Vidyādhara emperor Priyadarśana, how his pride was the cause of the curse of sage Matanga that transformed him into an elephant. But when penitently saluted and pacified, the anger of the great sage subsided, and he became soft which he usually always was by nature. Warmth in water is either by heating with fire, or by contact with solar rays, but the natural property of water is coolness. When prince Aja of the Ikshvāku family hits you with an arrow you would be freed from the curse and regain your original form. So favoured me the sage a treasure-house of penance:

मतङ्गणापादवलेपमूलादवाप्तवानस्मि मतंगजत्वम् । अवेहि गन्धवंपतेस्तनूजं प्रियंवदं मां प्रियदर्शनस्य ॥ स चानुनीतः प्रणतेन पश्चान्मया महर्षिमृ दुतामगच्छत् । उष्णत्वमग्न्यातपसंप्रयोगाच्छैत्यं हि यत्सा प्रकृतिजंलस्य ॥ इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवो यदा ते भेत्स्यत्यजः कुम्भमयोमुखेन । संयोक्ष्यसे स्वेन वपुर्महिम्ना तदेत्यवोचत्स तपोनिधिर्माम् ॥ Raghuvamsa 5.53-55.

There are several instances like this of a curse pronounced and immediately withdrawn, because a sage could never be harsh, is easily moved to pity, and would never nurse anger except for a few moments.

The deep affection of even those among the rishis, who had completely given up all attachments in this world, is easily seen in the utterance of Kanva who is in tears when Sakuntalā departs for her husband's home. In fact Sakuntalā was his foster daughter, found as a baby lying neglected, taken care of and brought up by him like a daughter. The attachment is so great that he wonders how he could burst into tears like that. That Sakuntalā is leaving today, touches my heart, with so much of a longing for her, my throat so choked with tears that I can hardly restrain. My vision is dimmed by sorrow. For me a denizen of the forest, merely because of affection bestowed, the mental weakness is indeed so very much, that I wonder how much more householders when they experience the first separation from their daughters would feel by the torment of that sorrow:

यास्यत्यद्य शकुन्तलेति हृदयं संस्पृष्टमुत्कण्ठया कण्ठः स्तम्भितवाष्पवृत्तिकलुषश्चिन्ताजडं दर्शनम् । वैक्लव्यं मम तावदीदृशमहो स्नेहादरण्यौकसः पीडचन्ते गृहिणः कथं नु तनयाविश्लेषदुःखैर्नवैः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,6.

Kanva is not only so kind to Śakuntalā, but the attachment is so great and the heart so melts like butter, that he feels and actually expresses a sense of relief that by her good deeds Śakuntalā is united to a husband most suited for her, whom he had already chosen for her; and he again points to a Navamālikā plant that has entwined itself around the mango tree to enjoy with affection what is equally a plant wedding. This now relieves him of his anxiety regarding the plant, as it has been entrusted to the care of the tree. And he himself, in the case of both Śakuntalā and the creeper is free from all anxiety about their future:

संकिल्पतं प्रथममेव मया तवार्थे भर्तारमात्मसदृशं सुकृतैर्गता त्वम् । चूतेन संगतवती नवमालिकेय मस्यामहं त्विय च संप्रति वीतिचिन्तः ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4,13.

It does not stop only with Śakuntalā. The *rishis* are so kind that they would allow anything in the case of the pet deer in the hermitage, allow them even to nestle in their lap, even as they are lost in deep meditation, though it disturbs their meditation. Bhāva matters as Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita has very well put it. Striking Śiva with the same flowers that devotees use with the intent of worshipping him, even as he was scattering them with the idea he would strike him, Cupid was reduced to ashes. Thus Śiva, is concerned only with the intention in the mind and not the external use of the object. That Lord is my deity. I would not even utter the name of any other (Fig. 80):

अर्चामि ि धिया यदेव कुसुमं क्षिप्त्वा जनो मुच्यते विध्यामोति धिया तदेव विकिरन् भस्मीकृतो मन्मथः । इत्याभ्यन्तरवृत्तिमात्ररिसको बाह्यानपेक्षश्च य: स स्वामी मम देवतं तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते।।

Śivotkarshamañjarī 2.

But the same meditation disturbed by celestial nymphs of ravishing beauty and charm threatens them always with a curse; and that is why the most successful of nymphs possessed of the acme of charm and perfection would still remonstrate with Indra before approaching a sage, as they well knew the dire consequences of such action:

> अयं सुरपते घोरो विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः। कोधमुत्स्रक्ष्यते घोरं मिय देव न संशयः॥ ततो हि मे भयं देव प्रसादं कर्तुं महंसि।

> > Rāmāyaņa 1,64,3-4.

The sages always wished good for the entire world. They would always try to help the king to establish *dharma*, though they were free from all attachments. In fact, we have to remember that the father of Śringi, Śamīka, a sage of great forbearance, being told by his son that he had cursed Parīkshit for his haughty behaviour in put-

ting a dead snake on his father's neck, under the mistaken notion that he had disregarded him by failing to welcome him to his hermitage, though ectually, being in a vow of silence, he could not reply his queries, still the sage, who had patiently borne the insult, felt so much for the ruler as the protector of *dharma*, that he expressed his disapproval of his son's act, but knowing the potency and the power of the penance of his son though yet almost a child, felt very sorry for the king, and sent his disciple to forewarn the king of the calamity that was ahead of him:

न मे प्रियं कृतं तात नैष धर्मस्तपिस्वनाम् ।.....

न ह्यहंित नृपः शापमस्मत्तः पुत्र सर्वथा ।
परीक्षिते नृपतये दयापन्नो महायशाः ।।
शिष्यं गौरमुखं नाम शीलवन्तं गुणान्वितम् ।।
आचख्यौ स च विश्रान्तो राज्ञः सर्वमशेषतः ।।
ऋषिः परमधर्मात्मा दान्तः शान्तो महातपाः ।.....
क्षान्तवान्स्तव तत्कर्मं पुत्रस्तस्य न चक्षमे ।।
तेन शप्तोसि राजेन्द्र पितुरज्ञातमद्य वै ।
तक्षकः सप्तरात्रेण मृत्युस्तव भविष्यति ।।
तत्र रक्षां कुष्ष्वेति पुनः पुनरथाब्रवीत् ।

Mahābhārata 1,41,20,33;13,16,18-21.

Vālmīki who is so deeply introspective has indeed the greatest regard for Rāma for his truthfulness, for his extracting the thorn of the three worlds Rāvaṇa, and for his humble nature that knew no pride, and yet, knowing the circumstances so well, has still an iota of anger towards Rāma for having been so unkind as he felt towards Sītā:

उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेष्यविकत्थनेऽपि । त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ।।

Raghuvamśa 14,73.

But he reassures Sītā as he expresses in his inimitable way the warmth of his kindess and affection, as he addresses her. Your world-famed father-in-law was my friend. Your father who could end cycles of births and deaths for even saints was also my comrade. You yourself are the foremost among the women who adore their husbands as their deity. What is there in you that does not upsurge my compassion for you:

तवोरुकीर्तिः स्वशुरः सखा मे सतां भवोच्छेदकरः पिता ते।
धुरि स्थिता त्वं पतिदेवतानां कि तन्न येनासि ममानुकम्प्या।।

Raghuvamsa 14,74.

Vālmīki represents the easily moved tender heart of a *rishi* in general as seen in his spontaneous grief bursting into poetry at the sight of a Krauncha bird shot from a loving pair by a hunter (Fig. 24) as pointed out earlier:

When the beautiful girl Pramadvarā, the child born of the nymph Menakā and the Gandharva king Viśvāvasu and brought up, like Śakuntalā by Kaṇva, in his hermitage by sage Sthūlakeśa, won the admiration and love of the hermit boy Ruru, son of sage Pramati and grandson of Chyavana and Sukanyā, and the sages had joyously fixed their wedding day, she suddenly died of snake bite, all the sages in the neighbourhood including such great ones as Ātreya, Kuśika, Uddālaka, Kaṭha, Bharadvāja and Gautama came to console, but themselves could not help bursting into tears. It is the pitiable sobs of Ruru that moved the celestials themselves to restore Pramadvarā back to life when Ruru gladly gave away a half of his life as ransom:

तत: सर्वे द्विजवरा: समाजग्मु: कृपान्विता:। स्वस्त्यात्रेयो महाजानुः कुशिकः शंखमेखल: ॥ उद्दालकः कठश्चीव श्रोतश्चीव महायशाः । भरद्वाजः कीनकृत्स्य आर्ष्टिषेणोऽथ गीतमः ॥ सह प्रतेण तथान्ये वनवासिनः। तां ते कन्यां व्यसं दष्ट्वा भूजङ्कस्य विषादिताम ॥ क्रपयाविष्टा रुरस्त्वातों बहिर्ययी।..... गत्वातिद्:खित: ।..... रुख्य कोश गहनं वनं यथा च जन्मप्रभति यतात्माहं दढव्रतः । प्रमद्वरा तथा ह्योपा समृत्तिष्ठत् भामिनी ।।..... उत्तिष्ठत्वायुषोर्धेन हरोरेव समन्विता । सोदतिष्ठतप्रमद्वरा ॥ एवमक्ते ततः कन्या

Mahābhārata 1,8,24-27,9,1,5,15-16.

As Aśvaghosha puts it, Ruru's love for Pramadvarā was so great that he not only restored her to life by giving up half his life but even jeopardised his peace and penance by killing snakes wherever he saw them:

प्रमद्वरायां च रुरुः प्रियायां भुजङ्गमेनापहृतेन्द्रियायाम् । संदृश्च संदृश्च जघान सर्पान् प्रियं न रोषेण तपो ररक्ष ॥

Saundarananda 7,37.

The sages moved to tears, recall that it is no wonder, when even a warrior like Caeser could shed tears as Shakespeare has it 'when that the poor have cried Caeser hath wept'. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma similarly grieves moved by the grief of his beloved subjects:

व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां मृशं भवति दुःखितः ।

Rāmāyana 2,1.

But an extraordinary surging kindness for the threee worlds to save whom one could give away ones own life is a rare phenomenon. The rishi is so kind-hearted that he would not think twice when requested for a good cause to give up his life itself. The case is that of Dadhīcha. Vritra was such a menace to Indra that all the devas headed by their lord consulted what was to be done of Brahmā with their hands clasped. Brahmā who already knew their predicament counselled them in the procedure of slaying Vritra. There is a sage of very noble disposition named Dadhīcha of the utmost dhārmik disposition and very kind in thought. If he were requested by all of you to give you his bones for the good of all the three worlds, he would certainly put an end to his body to make available his bones to you, the celestials, to be made into a thunderbolt of such potency that with a thunderous noise it would slay the unassailable enemy.

The devas accordingly with Nārāyaṇa as their leader went to the hermitage of Dadhīcha on the banks of the river Sarasvatī in a very peaceful atmosphere. Here they saw Dadhīcha lustrous like the sun or even like Brahmā himself. Falling at his feet with the utmost reverence, they requested him the impossible gift of his bones. The sage immediately felt immensely pleased and replied, Oh celestials! I shall certainly do whatever would benefit you, and shall immediately give up this body. Having so uttered, that greatest of mortals with the highest self-control gave up his life by withdrawing his vital breath. The celestials gathered the bones from his corpse. Now

happy that they were assured of their victory, they requested the celestial smith Tvashṭā to prepare the vajra of terrible form with six spokes, a thunderbolt that could reduce to ashes the enemy of the gods. That was the only way the lord of the celestials could establish himself in heaven by overcoming all his obstacles:

ततो वृत्रवधे यत्नमकूर्वन्त्रिदशाः पुरा। ब्रह्माणम्पतस्थिरे ॥ पुरस्कृत्य कृतांजलींस्त तान सर्वान्परमेष्ठीत्युवाच ह। विदितं मे सूराः सर्वं यद्वः कार्यं चिकीर्षितम् ॥ तम्पायं प्रवस्यामि यथा वृत्रं विघष्यथ। दधीच इति विख्यातो महानिष्ठदारघी: ॥ तं गत्वा सहिताः सर्वे वरं वै संप्रयाचत । स वो दास्यति धर्मात्मा सुप्रीतेनान्तरात्मना ॥ स वाच्यः सहितैः सर्वेभविद्धिर्जयकांक्षिभिः। स्वान्यस्थीनि प्रयच्छेति त्रैलोक्यस्य हिताय वै ॥ स शरीरं समृत्सज्य स्वान्यस्थीनि प्रदास्यति । तस्यास्थिभमंहाघोरं वज्रं संस्कृयतां दृढम् । तेन बच्चेण वै वृत्रं विघष्यति शतऋतु: ।। एवमुक्तास्ततो देवा अनुमान्य पितामहम । नारायणं पुरस्कृत्य दघीचस्याश्रमं ययुः॥ सरस्वत्याः परे पारे नानाद्रमलतावतम ।..... जाज्वल्यमानं वपूषा यथा लक्ष्म्या पितामहम ॥ तस्य पादौ सुरा राजन्नभिवाद्य प्रणम्य च। अयाचन्त वरं सर्वे यथोक्तं परमेष्ठिना ॥ ततो दधीचः परमप्रतीतः सूरोत्तमांस्तानिदमभ्यूवाच । करोमि यद्वो हितमद्य देवाः स्वं चापि देहं स्वयमूत्सजामि ॥ स एवम्बत्वा द्विपदां वरिष्ठः प्राणान् वशी स्वान्सहसोत्ससर्ज । ततः सुरास्ते जगृहः परासोरस्थीनि तस्याथ यथोपदेशम ॥ प्रहृष्टरूपाश्च जयाय देवास्त्वष्टारमागभ्य तमर्थमुचः। त्वष्टा तू तेषां वचनं निशम्य प्रहृष्टरूपः प्रयतः प्रयत्नात् ॥ चकार वर्ज भूशमूग्ररूपं कृत्वा च शकं स उवाच हृष्ट: । अनेन वज्जप्रवरेण देवा भस्मीक्रुष्वाद्य सुरारिमुग्रम ॥

Mahābhārata 3,100,5-24.

With their simple spirit, the *rishis* are highly appreciative. They would never miss an opportunity to praise something great and noble and take a delight in those encouraging *dharma*. When it is said that Rāma entered the forest to prevent his father from transgressing

truth, almost hurrying to the Dandaka, he not only entered the forest but also entered the minds of all the *rishis*:

विवेश दण्डकारण्यं प्रत्येकं च सतां मनः।

Raghuvamśa 12,9.

It is the appreciative mind of the *rishis* he entered. It is not without reason that Śarabhanga, Sutīkshna and even Agastya wait the arrival of Rāma, Atri included. Anasuyā's appreciation of Rāma is also echoed in her praise for Sītā for being so devoted to Rāma and to whom she had given the heavenly toilet, dress and ornaments which proclaimed Sītā even as she entered Ayodhyā on her return from Lankā with an effulgence all around her and a celestial perfume, as if she was still from the fire to prove to her husband and all assembled that she was by her own merit immaculate:

स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डलमानसूयं सा विश्वती शाश्वतमङ्गरागम्। रराज शुद्धेति पुनः स्वपुण्यैः सन्दर्शिता विह्नगतेव भर्ता॥

Raghuvamśa 14,14.

Rāma, not any less a *rishi* being a *Rajarishi* (Fig. 81), with due regard and appreciation of the *rishis* though himself a sage in the forest of a royal palace and though in a vow of absolute silence, out of respect for Vālmīki and other sages, moves towards them:

राज्याश्रमनिवासोऽपि प्राप्तकाष्ठमुनिव्रतः । वाल्मीकिगौरवादार्यं इत एवाभिवर्तते ॥

Uttararāmacharita 7,1.

Durvāsā, the most irascible sage who is least appreciative, himself goes into raptures over the simple but unparalleled dāna or giving away in sacrifice his food in its entirety, least caring for his own life, regardless of pinching hunger, and exclaims that Mudgala's sacrifice was beyond all praise:

त्वत्समो नास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन् दाता मात्सर्यवर्जितः ।..... अहो दानं विधुष्टं ते सुमहत्स्वर्गवसिभिः ॥ Mahābhārata 3,260,23,29.

When Hanumān in a wondrous manner magnifies himself into a vast form almost expanding yojanas, his body appearing almost beyond measure, to cross the ocean to search for Sītā in Lankā, the rishis

watching him spontaneously exclaim their wonder and the highest appreciation of this unprecedented deed:

ऋपयस्तुष्टुवश्चैनं प्लवमानं विहायसि ।

Rāmāyana 5,1.

It was not merely a silent appreciation but a chorus of loud exclamation of praise not by lesser beings that wonder easily even at trivial things but by those who had realised the highest Absolute and for whom nothing except something extraordinary like this would appeal so much as to proclaim their wonder and appreciation. They cannot help saying that with form assumed surpassing a mountain in size, Hanumān son of Marut himself in great speed was determined to cross the vast ocean, abode of huge whales, for the noblest cause of Rāma himself. This is the text of the utterance of the rishis that was heard by all including the celestials, Siddhas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, and all the others that watched with wonder:

गुरुगुन्त्र तदा शब्दं ऋषीणां भावितात्मनाम् । एष पवंतसङ्काशो हनुमान् मारुतात्मनः । तितीर्षति महावेगः समुद्रं मकरालयम् ॥

Rāmāyaņa 5,1,

Similarly when Kuśa and Lava in almost the voice of Kinnaras sweetly sang the great theme of Rāma and Sītā from the Rāmāyaṇa a classic poem of the great sage Vālmīki on the most noble theme, the rishis were moved almost to tears and knew not how to reward the two boys. It is no wonder that Kālidāsa describes the situation itself in a besitting verse:

वृत्तं रामस्य वाल्मीकेः कृतिस्तौ किन्नरस्वनौ। किं तद्येन मनो हर्तुंमलं स्यातांन श्रृष्वताम्।।

Raghuvamśa 15,64.

The appreciation of the sages though the highest should not be judged by the value of the reward that they gave to the young boys. The rishis could ill afford costly presents, but whatever they had, they freely gave which is the real spirit of sacrifice and appreciation. One gave a bark garment, another a kamandalu, a third a deer skin, yet another a waist cord of munja grass, another a sacred thread,

a rosary of beads and so on which was all in the highest spirit of appreciation.

तच्छ्रुत्वा मुनयः सर्वे बाष्पपर्याकुलेक्षणाः ।।
साधु साध्विति ताबूचुः परं विस्मयमागताः ।
ते प्रीतमनसः सर्वे मुनयो धर्मवत्सलाः ।।
प्रीतः कश्चिन्मुनिस्ताभ्यामुत्थितः कलशं ददौ ।।
प्रसन्नो वल्कलं कश्चिद्दौ ताभ्यां महायशाः ।
अन्यः कृष्णाजिनं प्रादान्मौञ्जीमन्यो मुनिर्ददौ ।।
यज्ञसूत्रमथापरः.....जपमालामथापरः....
आयुष्यमपरे प्राहुर्मुदा तत्र महर्षयः ।।

Rāmāyaņa 1,4,15,20-25.

Vālmīki says there then commenced the sweet song that excelled celestial melody and the listeners could never get satiated by this treasure of music.

ततः प्रवृत्तं मधुरं गान्धर्वमितमानुषम् । न च तृष्तिं ययुः सर्वे श्रोतारो मानसम्पदा ॥

Rāmāyana 1,94,15.

The *rishis* poor in material wealth were, nevertheless, rich in spiritual essence. They could by *praṇidhāna* or meditation see before their eyes the past, present and future in a trice. Everything appeared to them in its true form as truth was never hidden from them and all that they saw was just the bare truth. When Dilīpa in great distress because of his lack of progeny beseeched Vasishtha to suggest him a method to have righteous offspring to continue his line, the great sage went into a trance. By his profound meditation, he discovered the cause of the obstacle in the way of progeny for the king. In an inspired mood he gave out to him the result of his insight:

सोऽपश्यत्प्राणिधानेन सन्ततेः स्तम्भकारणम् । भावितात्मा भुवो भर्तुं रथैनं प्रत्यभाषत ॥

Raghuvamśa 1,74.

It is then that he informs him how he had failed to perambulate and adore the celestial cow who was under the Kalpa tree, his mind distracted by other ideas when naturally he failed to observe her presence. She had hence cursed that he could not have a son without adoring her own offspring:

Raghuvamśa 1,77.

When Vāļmīki met Sītā lamenting, abandoned by Rāma near his hermitage, he had no need to question her as he already knew by the power of his meditation that she had been abandoned by her lord. Kindly he addresses her to assuage her grief and tells her that he knew by his power of meditation that her husband had abandoned her perturbed in his mind by false calumny. You should not grieve therefore over this. He kindly hails her, Oh daughter of Janaka Vaideha! Know that you have come here to your own parental home, only situated elsewhere and not in its own place in Mithilā. He means that by that he is himself her father as much as Janaka himself. The great Rājarishi Janaka like Rāma knew the innocence of Sītā, and equally well Vālmīki, as also the helplessness of Rāma himself who, knowing the innocence of Sītā had to do this only to set an example to the world of how to avert any calamity of adharma that could happen on a pretext:

जाने विसृष्टां प्राणिघानतस्त्वां मिथ्यापवादक्षुभितेन भर्ता। तन्मा व्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्यं प्राप्तासि वैदेहि पितुर्निकेतम्।।

Raghuvamsa 1,72.

When Aditi requests Kasyapa to send word to Kanva about the happy end of the grief of Sakuntalā united with her lord again, the sage reminds her that there was no such need as Kanva, by his own meditative power, had already come to know of this event, but still, to satisfy her, he sends a disciple of his to inform him how everything had ended well:

अदितिः—भगवन् ! अस्य दुहितृमनोरथसंपत्ते: कण्वोऽिप तावच्छ्रुतविस्तरः क्रियताम् । मारीच: —तपःप्रभावात्प्रत्यक्षं सर्वमेव तत्रभवतः ।

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7

In spite of such profundity of vision, revealing to them what normally could never even be imagined, realising before their eyes what was almost beyond vision and mental approach, there yet was an illusion divine that could elude even such great seers. This was the māyā of the Supreme Being. An excellent example of this is found in the case of Mārkaṇḍeya narrated in several Purāṇas and in the Mahābhārata. It is also in the Matsyapurāṇa, Bhāgavata and other texts. Mārkaṇḍeya is a great figure as a seer who had the special favour of Śiva who singled him out for being protected from untimely death. The special favour that Śiva showed to Mārkaṇḍeya in his aspect as Kālāntaka which is also Mārkaṇḍeyānugrahamūrti is given by Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkshita. Did not even Rāma himself, that great lord, the most majestic wielder of the bow in all the three worlds, who got the special Sāntānika world vouchsafed for all those that followed him into the Sarayū, get reminded to leave the mortal world at the appointed hour by Death himself? Even that Death was kicked out from his life by that great ocean of mercy to protect an insignificant Brahmachārī boy who sought his protection. That lord is my deity and any other would not be even uttered by me by name:

वः सान्तानिकलोकदस्त्रिजगतां कोदण्डदीक्षागुरुः सोऽप्याहूयत मर्त्यभावभजनात्काले न कालेन किम् । तादृक्षोऽपि स कस्य चिद्द्विजवटोस्त्राणाय येनाहतः स स्वामी मम दैवतं तदितरो नाम्नाऽपि नाम्नायते ॥

Śivotkarshamañjari 9.

It has to be recalled here that the protector of the three worlds Vishnu born as Rāma was called back by Yama who came in the guise of a sage to remind the king when he was to return from the mortal world. It is an allusion to that and to Santanika or the special great heaven that was vouchsafed for the people of Ayodhyā who followed Rāma to drown themselves in Sarayū out of affection for him. Even that Yama who could remind the Lord himself was punished by Siva for daring to use his noose in the case of Markandeya even as he was adoring the Sivalinga in worship. of Kālāntakamūrti as Dīkshita puts it lies in the Devī to the left of Siva in his hermophrodite form, her leg acting for administering the blow that humbled Death himself. That is why Dīkshita says, in the comparatively easy conquest of Cupid achieved by the eye on the forehead, please do allow Sīva to have the entire credit, but Oh mother! what right has even the conqueror of the Tripuras to claim credit for what your left leg alone succeeded in achieving:

साघारगो स्मरजये निटिलाक्षिसाध्ये भागी शिवो भवतु नाम यशः समग्रम् । वामङिश्रमात्रकलिते जननि त्वदीये का वा प्रसक्तिरिह कालजये पुरारे: ।।

Ānandasāgarastava 56.

A representation at Ellora of the eighth century, a Rāshṭrakūṭa carving, is a lovely one, illustrating the theme (Fig. 82). In the magnificent Kālāri of the early Chola school of the time of Rājarāja from the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tañjāvur (Fig. 83), the wall on either side of the niche in which Siva is enshrined dancing on prostrate Yama at his feet, there is Mārkaṇḍeya on to the left clinging to the linga in despair and Yama to the right with his noose to fetch the life of the devoted hermit boy. The overcoming of Death meant eternal life for Mārkaṇḍeya, and among the chirañjīvis, those who live during the aeons irrespective of the deluge that may now and then come and go with the end of a yuga, Mārkaṇḍeya is one.

Mārkaṇḍeya was anxious to have an idea of the māyā of Vishṇu which is suggestive of the highest philosophic thought which is incomprehensible. Vishṇu promised and vouchsafed him the vision. Yudhishṭhira, visited by Mārkaṇḍeya, who had come to comfort him in the forest where he was living in vanavāsa, requested by him to narrate his experience of vishṇumāyā describes to him a graphic picture of almost the impossible that happened in his life.

The Lord is the creator and is the transformer, is the essence of the elements, their creator and lord, difficult to meditate on, a great wonder indeed, the holiest of holy, with neither a beginning nor an end. He is the Universal Being, undiminishing, imperishable, the creator, uncreated, the cause of all action, incomprehensible even to those who know all the Vedas from the beginning. There are four yugas calculated in thousands of years and in that calculation, a small part is dawn or dusk extending over thousands of years again, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali with the intermediate period between them. With the end of Kali begins again the Krita aeon. Then is the deluge when there is just a little left of each aeon. When people deteriorate ethically, the clouds move in the sky dark like the blue lotus, yellow like

the pollen, of golden colour like herons, red like the lotus, some like herds of elephants, yet others dark like makara crocodiles, with streaks of lightning on them, terrible to behold, roaring and thundering frightfully, continuously pouring for a full twelve years, completely submerging the universe by their downpour, when transgessing its limits the ocean goes beyond its boundary. Inhaling that wild breath, the lord of the lotus sleeps in the flower in that one mass of water so frightful to behold, with all movable and immovable things submerged and lost, where there is neither atmospheric space nor any other. Alone I had been wandering here and there, finding none else around. Having tramped ever so long and ever so fatigued, I saw in that mass of water a huge and spreading banyan tree on a long bough of which on a leaf there was seated a child with eyes wide like the lotus petal and face like the moon. Bewildered I pondered how a child could sleep quietly like that when the whole universe was destroyed. With all the power of my penance I could not comprehend the child. He looked the very abode of the goddess of prosperity herself, lustrous with the śrīvatsa mark on his chest. The child spoke so sweetly. I note you are tired and want to rest. Oh Mārkandeya! Sit here. Go into my body, great seer! When I was almost despairing of life and even existence, the boy opened his mouth and without the least effort on my part I entered it, went into his stomach, and there I saw in him with great wonder the entire universe, all the rivers like Ganga, Sutudrī, Yamuna, Kausikī, Sindhu, Godāvarī, Narmadā and all the other holy streams. The ocean I saw there, receptacle of great gems and filled with aquatic monsters. I saw the sky lit up by the moon and the sun, lustrous like the fire and wild forests. Here were sacrificing Brāhmaņas, Kshatriyas equally engaged in their valorous acts and all the others. Here appeared mountains like Himavan, Hemakuta, Mandara, Gandhamadana, Meru, Malaya and others, all living creepers on earth were there and in him were all the hordes of celestials starting with Indra, the Sadhyas, Rudras, Āditvas, Pitris, Nāgas, Gandharvas and so forth. Every conceivable thing was there, the entire universe. I could never see the end of anything as it was a wonderful long endless panorama. And even as I was wondering, I was brought out by the force of the speediest breath through his open mouth. Again I found the boy on the branch of the banyan tree. Almost smiling the boy spoke to me.

Have you rested for a while in my body, Markandeya? I caught hold of his pink tender feet, placed my head on them and humbly bowed to him, with my hands brought together in reverence. Oh my lord! I want to know all about you and this your great illusion. I had seen everything in your abdomen. I went in and returned without any volition of mine. How is it as a little child you are here after having consumed the entire universe? How long are you to be here in this state? So asked by me, the child reassuringly spoke to me. Even the great celestials have not known me. Because of my love for you I am telling you this. You are devoted to your father. You are a great Brahmarishi. You have sought refuge in me and your Brahmacharva is so great that I indicate it to you. The waters were originally called by me nāra, and they being my abode, I am spoken of as Nārāyana, the creator of all beings and the destroyer. I am Vishņu, I am Brahmā, Indra the lord of celestials, Kubera, Siva, Soma, Prajāpati, and Kasyapa. I am everything. Agni is my mouth, my feet are the earth, the sky and moon are my eyes, the sky is my head, the directions are my ears, the waters my essence, my breath is in my mind. I do the sacrifices and the knowledgeable in the Vedas perform several sacrifices for me. As the Naga Sesha I support the earth surrounded by the four oceans and decorated by mountains like Meru and Mandara. The earth that was immersed was raised by me as Varāha. I drink up the waters as fire in the form of vadavā. Brahma is from my face, Kshatriya from my arms, Vaisya from my thighs, and the Sudra from my feet in that order. The Rigveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda all arise from me and go back into me. In meditation I am contemplated on by rare great ascetics in great peace, thirsting for knowledge of me, free from desires, anger, jealousy, shunning company and sin, ever ethical, free from ego and ever erudite in the highest of knowledge of the Absolute. I am the encircling fire, wind, sun, and stars in the sky, the oceans clothe me and act as my couch and are my abode. Whenever there is deterioration of merit and the uprise of demerit I create myself to set this right. For thousands of cycles of aeons I sleep on as the personification of the universe, bewildering all beings. This is my eternal stay in the form of a child though I am not a child, a guise assumed till Brahmā awakes. I had as Brahmā promised a boon for you long ago. Pleased with you as a worshipful seer and as you were fatigued I have shown you this divine vision

when the whole world is one sheet of water, with everything lost and submerged. Having so said, the child disappered. Oh king Yudhishthira! I had seen this wonder long ago and received a boon from him that I would never forget it and that I would have the longest life and death according to my wish. The great ancient being is Krishna of the Vrishni family who supports all this. You should seek refuge of him and he will protect you:

तस्मादिच्छाम्यहं रुगोतुं सर्वहेत्वात्मिकां कथाम् ॥ बहशस्त्वयैकेन द्विजोत्तम।..... अनुभृतं हि एष कर्ता विकर्ता च भतानां भतकृत्प्रभः। पवित्रमिति अचिन्त्यं महदाश्चर्यं विश्वमन्ययमक्षयम्। अनादिनिधनं भतं एष कर्ता न क्रियते कारणं चापि पौरुषे।। यद्येष पुरुषो वेद वेदा अपि न तं विदुः। सर्वमाश्चर्यमेवैतन्निर्व तं राजसत्तम ॥ आदितो मनुजन्याघ्र कृत्स्नस्य जगत: क्षये। चत्वार्याहः सहस्राणि वर्षाणां तत्कृतं यूगम् ॥ तस्य तावच्छती सन्ध्या सन्ध्यांशश्च तथाविध: । वर्षसहस्राणि त्रेतायुगमिहोच्यते ॥ तस्य तावच्छती सन्ध्या सन्ध्यांशञ्च ततः परम् । वर्षसहस्रे हे द्वापरं परिमाणतः ॥..... तथा क्षीणे कलियगे चैव प्रवर्तेत कृतं युगम्। एषा द्वादशसाहस्री युगाख्या परिकीर्तिता।। एतत्सहस्रपर्यन्तमहो ब्राह्ममुदाहृतम्। ब्रह्मभवने परिवर्तते ॥ हि सर्वतः महामेघा नभस्यद्भ तदर्शनाः ॥ उत्तिष्ठन्ति केचिन्नीलोत्पलश्यामाः केचित्क्रमुदसंनिभाः। केचित्कञ्जल्कसंकाशाः केचित्पीताः पयौधराः॥ कारण्डवनिभास्तथा। केचिद्धारिद्रसंकाशाः केचिद्धिङ्गुलसंनिभाः॥ केचित्कमलपत्राभाः केचिद्रजकुलोपमाः। केचित्पुरवराकाराः केचिदञ्जनसंकाशाः केचिन्मकरसंनिभा: ॥ विद्युन्मालापिनद्वाङ्गाः समृत्तिष्ठन्ति वै घनाः। घोरस्वननिनादिताः॥ घोररूपा महाराज ततो जलधराः सर्वे व्याप्नुवन्ति नभस्थलम् ॥ सर्वा तैरियं पृथिवी सपर्वतवनाकरा। ते महाराज आपूर्य सलिलीघपरिप्लूता ।।.....

तत: समुद्रः स्वां वेलामतिकामति भारत। संवेष्टियत्वा नश्यन्ति वायूवेगपराहताः ॥ ततस्तं मारुतं घोरं स्वयम्भूमंनुजाधिप। आदिः पद्यालयो देवः पीत्वा स्वपिति भारत ॥ एकार्णवे जले घोरे विचरन पार्थिवोत्तम। अपरयन्सर्वभृतानि वैक्लव्यमगमं सुदीर्घ गत्वाहं प्लवमानो नराधिप। ञ्चान्तः क्वचिन्न शरणं लभाम्यहमतन्द्रितः ॥ कदाचित्पश्यामि तस्मिन्सलिलसञ्चर्ये। न्यग्रोधं सुमहान्तं वै विशालं पृथिवीपते ।। शाखायां तस्य वृक्षस्य विस्तीर्णायां नराधिप। पर्यञ्के पृथिवीपाल दिव्यास्तरणसंस्तृते ॥ उपविष्टं महाराज पद्येन्द्रसद्शाननम्। फुल्लपद्मविशालाक्षं वालं पश्यामि भारत।। ततो मे पृथिवीपाल विस्मयः सुमहानभूत्। कथं त्वयं शिशुः शेते लोके नाशभुपागते ॥ तपसा चितयंत्र्यापि तं शिशुं नोपलक्षये। भतं भव्यं भविष्यं च जानन्नपि नराधिप।। अतसीपूष्पवर्णाभः श्रीवत्सांङ्कितभूषणः। साक्षाल्लक्ष्म्या इवावासः स तदा प्रतिभाति मे ॥ मामब्बीदालः स पद्मिनभलोचनः। श्रीवत्सधारी द्वतिमान वाक्यं श्रुतिसुखावहम् ॥ जानामि त्वां परिश्रान्तं ततो विश्रान्तिकांक्षिणम्। मार्कण्डेय इहास्स्व त्वं यावदिच्छिस भार्गव।। अभ्यन्तरं शरीरे मे प्रविश्य मृनिसत्तम। आस्स्व भो विहितो वास: प्रसादस्ते कृतो मया ॥..... ततो बालेन तेनास्यं सहसा विवृतं कृतम्। तस्याहमवशो वक्त्रे दैवयोगात्प्रवेशितः ॥ ततः प्रविष्टस्तत्कृक्षि सहसा मनुजाघिय। सराष्ट्रनगराकीणां कृत्स्नां पश्यामि मेदिनीम् ॥ गङ्गां शतद्रं सीतां च यमुनामथ कौशिकीम्। चर्मण्वतीं वेत्रवतीं चन्द्रभागां सरस्वतीम्।। सिन्धं चैव विपाशां च नंदी गोदावरीमपि।..... ततः समूद्रं पश्यामि यादोगणनिपेविताम्। निधिमुत्तमम् ॥ रत्नाकरममित्रघ्न पयसो पश्यामि गगनं चन्द्रसूर्यविराजितम्। जाज्वत्यमानं तेजोभिः पावकार्कसमप्रभम् ॥..... हिमवन्तं च पश्यामि हेमकूटं च पर्वतम्। निषदं चापि पश्यामि श्वेतं च रजतान्वितम् ॥ मन्दरं मनुजन्याघ्र नीलं चापि महागिरिम्। महेन्द्रं चैव पश्यामि बिन्ध्यं च गिरिमुत्तमम् ॥..... शकादींश्चापि पश्यामि कृत्स्नान्देवगणानहम्। साध्यान् रुद्रांस्तथाऽदित्यान् गुह्यकान् पितरस्तदा ।। स्पर्णाश्च वसूनप्यश्चिनावपि । सपन्नगान् गन्धर्वाप्सरसो यक्षान् ऋषीं ख्रेव महीपते ।।..... न च पश्यामि तस्याहं देहस्यान्तं कदाचन।। धावमानश्च चिन्तयानो विशापते ।..... ततस्तमेव शरणं गतोऽस्मि विधिवत्तदा।..... ततोऽहं सहसा राजन वायुवेगेन निःस्तः। महात्मनो मुखात्तस्य विवृतात्पुरुषोत्तम ।। ततस्तस्यैव शाखायां न्यग्रोधस्य विशापते। आस्ते मनुजशार्द् ल कृत्स्नमादाय वै जगत्।। वालवेषेण श्रीवत्सकृतलक्षणम्। आसीनं तं नरव्याद्य पश्याम्यमिततेजसम् ॥ ततो मामब्रवीद्वालः स प्रीतः प्रहसन्निव।..... शरीरेस्मिन्मामके मुनिसत्तम। उषितस्त्वं सुविश्रान्तो मार्कण्डेय ब्रवीहि मे ॥ तस्य ताम्रतली तात चरणी सुप्रतिष्ठितौ। प्रयत्नेन मया मूर्ध्ना गृहीत्वा ह्यभिवन्दितौ ।।..... ज्ञात्मिच्छामि देव त्वां मायां चैतां तवोत्तमाम् ॥ इह भुत्वा शिशुः साक्षात्किं भवानवितष्ठते। पीत्वा जगदिदं सर्वमेतदाख्यातुमर्हसि ।। इत्युक्तः स मया श्रीमान्देवदेवो महाद्युतिः। सान्त्वयन्मामिदं वाक्यमुवाच वदतां वरः ॥ कामं देवा अपि न मां बिप्रा जानन्ति तत्त्वतः। त्वत्त्रीत्या तु प्रवक्ष्यामि यथेदं विसृजाभ्यहम् ॥ पितृभक्तोऽसि विप्रर्षे मां चैव शरणं गतः। ततो दृष्टोऽस्मि ते साक्षाद्ब्रह्मचर्यं च ते महत्।। अपां नारा इति पूरा संज्ञाकर्म कृतं मया। तेन नारायणोऽप्युक्तो मम तत्त्वयनं सदा।। अहं नारायणो नाम प्रभवः शाश्वतोऽव्ययः। विधाता सर्वभूतानां संहर्ता च द्विजोत्तम ॥ अहं विष्णु रहं ब्रह्मा शक्रश्चांह सुराधिपः। अहं वैश्रवणो राजा यमः प्रेताधिपस्तथा।।

अहं शिवश्च सोमश्च कश्यपोऽथ प्रजापति:। अहं धाता विधाता च यज्ञश्चाहं द्विजोत्तम।। अग्निरास्यं क्षितिः पादौ चन्द्रादित्यौ च लोचने । द्यौर्म र्घा खं दिशः श्रोत्रे तथापः स्वेदसम्भवाः ॥ सदिशं च नभः कायो वायुर्मनिस मे स्थितः। मया ऋतूशतैरिष्टं बहुभिः स्वाप्तदक्षिणैः ॥ यजन्ते वेदविद्यो मां देवयजने स्थितम्। प्यिव्यां क्षत्रियेन्द्राश्च पार्थिवाः स्वर्गकांक्षिणः ॥..... शेषो भृत्वाहमेवैतां धारयामि वसुन्धराम्। वाराहं रूपमास्थाय मयेयं जगती पूरा॥..... अग्निश्च वडवावक्त्रो भृत्वाहं द्विजसत्तम ।..... ब्रह्म वक्त्रं भुजी क्षत्रमूरू मे संस्थिता विशः ॥ पादौ शद्रा भवन्तीमे विक्रमेण क्रमेण च। यजुर्वेदोऽप्यथर्वणः ॥ ऋग्वेदः सामवेदश्च मत्तः प्राद्रभवन्त्येते मामेव प्रविशन्ति च। यतयः शान्तिपरमा यतात्मानो वभूत्सवः ॥ कामकोघद्वेषमुक्ता निःसङ्गा वीतकल्मषाः। सत्त्वस्था निरहङ्कारा नित्यमध्यात्मकोविदाः ॥ मामेव सततं विप्राश्चिन्तयन्त उपासते । अहं संवर्तको वाह्मिरहं संवर्तकोऽनलः।। अहं संवर्तकः सूर्यस्त्वहं संवर्तकोऽनिलः। तारारूपाणि दृश्यन्ते यान्येतानि नभ:स्थले।। रत्नाकरः समुद्रश्च सर्व एव चतुर्दिशम्।। वसनं शयनं चैव विलयं चैव विद्धि मे। सविभक्तस्ते देवकार्यार्थसिद्धये ॥..... यदा यदा च घर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति सत्तम। अभ्यत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽत्मानं सृजाभ्यहम् ॥..... यावद्यानां विप्रर्षे सहस्रपरिवर्तनात् ॥ ताबत्स्विपमि विश्वातमा सर्वभूतानि मोहयन्। एवं सर्वमहं कालिमहास्से मुनिसत्तम। अशिशः शिश्रुरूपेण यावद्व्रह्मा न ब्ध्यते। मया च दत्तो विप्राग्रच वरस्ते ब्रह्मरूपिणा।। असकृत्परितृष्टेन विप्रिषिगुणपुजित ।..... विक्लवोऽसि मया जातस्ततस्ते दशितं जगत्। अभ्यन्तरं शरीरस्य प्रविष्टोऽसि यदा मम।। इत्युक्तवान्तहितस्तात स देव: परमाद्भृत:। एवं दृष्टं मया राजस्तिस्मिन्प्राप्ते युगक्षये।। बाश्चर्य भरतश्रेष्ठ सर्वधर्मभृतां

अस्यैव वरदानाद्धि स्मृतिर्न प्रजहाति माम्। दीर्घमायुश्य कौन्तेय स्वच्छन्दमरणं मम।। स एष कृष्णो वार्ष्णेयः पुराणपुरुषो विभुः। गच्छध्वमेनं शरणं शरण्यं कौरवर्षभ।।

Mahābhārata 3,185,14-143; 189,1-5-7

This is one of the finest images of a peculiar Viśvarūpa of Vishņu as the child on the banyan leaf sucking his toe holding one of his feet with his two hands, a favourite theme in painting of various schools like Kāngrā, Basoḥli and so forth (Fig 84). Mārkaṇḍeya represents the oldest seers and age itself in its fullness, and the child connotes the juvenile spirit of the child just born and enjoying life with great zest, on this magical universal leaf from the banyan tree which is symbolic of the spread of the coolness of the shade as divine protection to ward off the heat of all mundane sorrows.

The power of penance of the *rishis* is itself a great glory. The tapovana of the *rishi* is a place similar to where the deer is free to roam about. Such a spot like Mrigadāva at Sārnāth is considered fit for sacrifice. Manu has categorically stated that where the black antelope could roam peacefully, without fear, it is fit ground for sacrifice:

कृष्णसारस्तु चरित मृगो यत्र स्वमावतः। स ज्ञेयो यज्ञियो देशो म्लेच्छदेशस्ततः परः॥

Manusmṛiti 2, 23.

Dushyanta as he enters the tapovana with drawn bow, in his swift chariot, is stopped by a Rishikumāra, who warns him not to shoot the innocent deer of the hermitage (Fig. 85):

राजन्! भ्राश्रममृगोऽयं न हन्तव्यो न हन्तव्यः।

Athijñānaśākuntalam 1.

An arrow in the tender body of the deer is like fire in a heap of soft cotton wool (Fig. 86):

न खलु न खलु वाणः संनिपात्योयमस्मिन्
मृदुनि मृगशरीरे तूलराशाविवाग्नि:।
क्व बत हरिणकानां जीवितं चातिलोलं
क्व च निशितनिपाता वज्रसाराः शरास्ते।।

Athijñānaśākuntalam 1, 10.

How else could he think of the deer when he was only accustomed to the sight of the pets lying across the doorway of the hermitage munching the nīvāra corn dried in the courtyard, to a share of which they were entitled:

म्राकीर्ग्यमृषिपत्नीनामुटजद्वाररोधिमि:। म्रपत्यैरिव नीवारभागधेयोचितैर्मृगै:

Raghuvamśa 1, 50.

The tender hearts of the Rīshis, who would not mind the Kuśa grass, specially secured by them for their ritual being nibbled by deer, and who would even allow the new-born little ones shed their navel cord as they nestled in their laps:

क्रियानिमित्तेष्विप वत्सलत्वादभग्नकामा मुनिभि: कुशेषु । तदंकशय्याच्यूतनाभिनाला कन्चिन्मृगीणामनघा प्रसृति: ।।

Raghuvamśa 5, 8.

is only matched by the tenderness of the *Rishikanyās*, the hermit girls, that would immediately withdraw from the plants and trees after watering them so that the birds could drink water unafraid from the water channels around the roots:

सेकान्ते मुनिकन्याभिस्तत्क्षणोज्भितवृक्षकम् । विश्वासाय विहंगानामालवालाम्बुपायिनाम् ॥

Raghuvamśa 1, 51.

A typical example of this is Śakuntalā, the innocent maiden of the hermitage, who not only knew how to love the animals and birds but also the very plants in the penance grove. Though, like those of her kind, she was very fond of adorning herself, she would not, because of her intense affection for the trees, gather even a sprout for her personal use, but would beam with pleasure at the very first appearance of flowers on the tree:

पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवतां स्नेहेन या पल्लवम् । श्राद्ये व: कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्या मवत्युत्सव: सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वेरनुज्ञायताम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 4, 9.

In such an atmosphere of love even the immobile sthāvaras, like plants and trees, reciprocate love, and it is no wonder that the

Vanadevatās, with their hands peeping from the branches (Fig. 87), showered jewels and costly silks on Śakuntalā as presents, to adorn herself, as she set out for her husband's home:

क्षौमं केन चिदिन्दुकान्ति तरुणा मङ्गल्यमाविष्कृतं निष्ठ्यूतश्चरणोपभोगसुलभो लाक्षारसः केनचित्। अन्यभ्यो वनदेवताकरतलैरोपर्वभागोत्थितै-र्वत्तान्याभरणानि तत्किसलयोद्धेदप्रतिद्वन्द्विभिः॥

Abhijñāśākuntalam 4.

This is clearly depicted in sculpture in a whole length of Kalpavallī creeper running all along the coping of the Bhārhut railing with jewels, flowers, silk, etc. as being offerings as well as in the graphic representation of trees with the hands of the Vanadevatās peeping from between the branches with offerings of water and food eagerly received by grateful guests.

In this picture of the tapovana and the āśrama, where peace pervaded everywhere, there could be no scope for anything that was contrary to love and amity. The question of the powerful or ferocious and weak or mild could not arise amongst animals or birds. Rightly in such an atmosphere Kālidāsa could say:

ऊनं न सत्त्वेष्वधिको बबाधे तस्मिन्वनं गोप्तारि गाहमाने ।

Raghuvamśa 2, 14.

In the āśrama of Upamanyu Vaiyāghrapāda, the son of Vyāghrapāda, visited by Kṛishṇa, a striking spectacle noticed was the play of the mongoose with the snake as a friend and tigers and lions lovingly sporting with the deer. Here was maitrī, surge of natural friendliness, in an atmosphere of great love and affection. The affection of the hermits had the great quality of maitrī in such abundance that their hermitage was indeed beautiful not only in appearance but sweet in its atmosphere as well, with a variety of birds and animals including the tiger and other ferocious ones so transformed in consonance with the rishis who were the very embodiment of the knowledge of Vedas and Vedāngas:

क्रीडिन्त सर्पेनंकुला मृगैन्याँघ्राश्च मित्रवत् । प्रभावाद्दीप्ततपसः संनिकुष्टगुणान्विताः ॥ तत्राश्रमपदे श्रेष्ठे सर्वभूतमनोहरे। सेविते द्विजशार्द् लैर्वेदवेदाङ्गपारगै: ॥

Mahāvīracharita 13, 14, 42-43.

Kshemendra describes a similar coming together of inmical animals and birds in the loving atmosphere of the āśrama of Agastya.

When Rāma approaches the hermitage of Agastya, there is an atmosphere of peace and serenity, of holiness, of utmost friendliness towards one and all, radiating as it were from all the sages and Agastya principally, that makes even the trees and plants in the area, not to talk of the animals and birds, emulate their virtues. Rāma remarks that his heart leaps up in joy to behold this rare spectacle. The trees, with the swarms of bees on their tender leaves like rosaries of beads in the fingers, wearing a garment of bark as it were, the twigs serving as holy twigs, are almost sages so transformed. The natural inveterate enmity between the lion and the elephant is set at rest as also that of the snake and the peacock. They are completely transformed from their tāmasik attitude into a subtle sātvik mood, nay, a step further advanced, they exchange friendly looks and offer an abundance of love and affection mutually:

भृङ्गाक्षमालावलयव्यप्रपल्लवपाणयः ।
पलाशिनो वल्किलिनो भान्त्येते मुनयो यथा ।।
प्रशान्तवैररजसं सिहेभफणिर्वीहणम् ।
प्रेमप्रणियनी चेष्टा निर्विकारैव दृश्यते ।।
शीलवृत्तिः शमेनेव दानेनेव दयालुता ।
मुनिना दक्षिरोयं दिग्विभाति द्यौरिवेन्द्रना ।।

Rāmāyaṇamañjarī 3, 464-448.

Like the sky beautified by the moon, character and bearing is beautified by the control of senses, and the quality of mercy and intense feeling for suffering by sacrifice and the desire to give away. Animals, birds and reptiles in sculpture or painting are shown as opposites come together, wherever the attitude of universal love of a sage is sought to be illustrated.

Aśvaghosha describes the peace reigning supreme in the surrondings of the hermitage of sage Kapila where even wild beasts so ferocious moved peacefully with the innocent deer as if taught humility and love by the sages there who were their common refuge: अपि क्षुद्रमृगा यत्र शान्ताश्चेरः समं मृगैः। शरण्येभ्यस्तपस्विभ्यो विनयं शिक्षिता इव।।

Saundarananda 1, 12.

An early Śunga sculpture from Mathurā shows a rishi almost in friendly conversation with birds, snakes and deer (Fig. 88).

In the panel from Deogarh representing Naranārāyana (Fig. 20), where Vishnu in the guise of a sage, is expounding the highest truth, the atmosphere of the tapovana is vividly presented by the snake, the deadliest receptacle of venom, in the vicinity of the innocent and harmless pair of deer, and also by the tiger, with its terrible teeth, ordinarily a great source of fear, but here unable to exite it. This same idea is also repeated in later sculpture, as for instance in the case of Siva as a teacher for the sages themselves, seated under the large spreading banyan tree as Dakshināmūrti. The representation of Dakshināmūrti from Kāverīpākkam showing the innocent deer and venomous serpent together (Fig. 89), like the deer and the tiger together, and cat surrounded by mice (Fig. 90) in Arjuna's penance at Mahābalipuram, is all more or less a glorification of the prabhava of tapas or penance. It is by tapas that Arjuna got his Pāśupata weapon. It is by penance that Bhagīratha brought down the Ganges, the heavenly river. It is by penance that Bhrigu, the son of Varuna, realised the truth of the Absolute. It is by penance that Viśvāmitra attained the impossible, became a Brahmarishi, and rightly as Bhavabhūti says:

वसिष्ठ: सत्यमीदृशो विश्वामित्रः।
यद्वाचां विषयमतीत्य चेतसां वा
पर्यायात्परमितशायनस्य वा यत्।
ब्रह्मषौ तदिह दुरासदे समिद्धं
तेजोभिज्वंलित महत्त्वमप्रमेयम्॥

Mahāvīracharita 4, 15.

In Bhārhut there is a sculpture of an ascetic seated in the company of animals. It is the Bodhisattva in the Bhaisa Jātaka, (Fig 91) who, though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, had given up all his wealth and treasures for a life of renunciation in a hermitage on the Himālaya with his sister, and so impressed even the animals by his simple life, that an elephant and a monkey also joined him to live a similar life. When Śakra, just to test him, stole the share of lotus

fibres intended for the meal of the Bodhisattva, even the animals joined the Bodhisattva's sister in taking an oath to vindicate their innocence in regard to the disappearance of the fibres, till finally Sakra revealed himself to apologise and explained to the Bodhisattva that he was only testing him. Such high notions of personal conduct in an animal like a monkey, normally ever so fickle and ready for mischief, only reflects the high potency of the atmosphere of virtue in a hermitage of true ascetics, who have completely obliterated passion and desire for things and live abstemiously. The sculpture graphically represents the emphasis on this aspect of saintly life and its influence. It also has to be brought in the context of satya or truth worshipped as the Almighty by Satyavachā son of Rathītara. This story of the oath taken by each denying the stealing of the fibres is all from the Mahābhārata from the Anuśāsanaparva. Kshemendra has given a beautiful epitome of this styled bisastainya or the stealing of the fibres in his Bhāratamanjarī. It is here the seven rishis and Arundhatī who, at a time when there was a severe drought for years, famished and hungry without food for ever so long, were offered wealth to acquire food by king Vrishadarbhi, but, as the rishis considered pratigraha or receiving a gift from a king as detrimental to their power of penance and against the principle of tapasya, preferred to go hungry. The king arranged for golden fruit to be thrown in their way hoping they would collect at least these. But the sages who had no such desires, would not touch them. Sakra himself appeared as a fat and sleek young ascetic called Sunahsakha and joined their company. The king, angry with the sages for their so rejecting every effort of his to help them in that period of drought, created a demon to look after a lotus lake full of lotuses. The rishis when they sighted the lake, wanted to feed themselves on lotus fibres, but, the demon would not allow them to enter the lake till he knew who they were. Each one individually introduced himself and Arundhatī as well. When the demon asked a second time the name of Sunahsakha, the sages got enraged, and reduced him to ashes. They collected enough lotus fibres for all of them, laid them on the bank to partake of them after their bath and ablutions, but what was their surprise when they reached the bank and found the fibres missing! When a thing badly needed is lost, even the most beloved and intimate have suspicions among themselves, and each one took an oath by trying to utter imprecations

regarding whoever stole the fibres. Sunahsakha, however, made a strange statement that whosoever had stolen the fibres should give a very beautiful girl to an immaculate brahmachārī, a sacrificer of great lustre and repository of the Veda. The rishis at once said it was a wish of his own and fixed the theft of the fibres on him, which he readily accepted with a smile, assuring them that he wanted to save the rishis from accepting what they would not even in dire starvation, if they knew that the demon who watched the lake was created by Vrishadarbhi to thwart them. He had reduced him to ashes and removed the lotus stalks. He revealed himself as Indra, and in the aerial car that arrived, he took them all to heaven:

तत: शशिकराकारा: समुद्धृत्य मृणालिका:। तीरे निक्षिप्य मूनयः स्नात्वा चक्रुर्जनिकयाम् ॥ अथोत्थाय विसाहारसादरास्ते श्रमाकुलाः। बिसानि तानि नापश्यन्त्यस्तानि नालिनीतटे ।। परस्परं शंकिताश्य चिकरे शपथं कमात। सहसाभिमतोच्छेदो महतामपि दुसह: ॥..... परदाराभिगामी च गरद: सोमविकयी। पिश्चनश्चास्त्वसौ येन हृतं नो बिसभोजनम् ॥ इत्तुक्ते मुनिभि : पश्चात्तानुवाच शुनःसखः। याजिने छन्दसां धाम्ने शृद्धाय ब्रह्मचारिएो ॥ देयात्स कन्यकां येन हतान्यत्र विसानि न:। श्रुत्वैतद्चम् नयः त्वया भाषितमीप्सितम् ॥ त्वयैव हतमस्माकं सर्वथा बिसभोजनम्। इति तेषु ब्रवागोषु हसन् प्राप शुन:सख:।। मयैवेह बिसस्तैन्यं कृतं वो हितकारिणा। सा च कृत्या हता घोरा देवोऽहं त्रिदशेश्वर: ॥ इत्यक्तवा निजमास्थाय रूपं सप्तर्षिभिः सह। नाकं नाकपतिर्ययौ॥ वेल्लद्रिमानमालांकं प्रतिग्रहनिवत्तानामेवमुज्ज्वलचेतसाम् । विभात्यलौल्याभरणवृत्तिः संतोषशालिनाम् ॥

Bhāratamañjarī 13, 1605-1615.

The description of the trees of the āśrama welcoming guests in their own way acting like rishis is graphically described by Harshadeva. Jīmūtavāhana is all praise for the peace of the penance grove where the difficult Vedic texts were discussed by sages who were the very embodiment of contentment, that cut green samidh twigs while

reciting Vedic hymns to memorise them, even as the young hermit maidens filled the channels at the roots of the plants with water from the adjoining streams. The trees thus appeared to address sweet words of welcome to the guests through the humming of their bees, offer salutation with their heads bent under the weight of their fruit which also served as offerings, and by scattered flowers as if they were offering worshipful arghya to the visitors to the hermitage. He wonders whether the trees had been taught the proper mode of reception of guests by the atmosphere of the rishis:

ग्रहो नु खलु मुदितमुनिजनप्रविचायंमानसंदिग्धवेदवाक्यविस्तरस्य पठद्वटुजन-च्छिद्यमानाद्वेसिमधः तापसकुमारिकापूर्यमानवालवृक्षकालवालस्य प्रशान्तरभ्यता तपोवनस्य । इह हि मधुरिमव वदन्ति स्वागतं भृङ्गशब्दै-नंतिमिव फलनम्नैः कुर्वतेऽमी शिरोभिः । मम ददत इवाध्यं पुष्पवृष्टीः किरन्तः कथमतिथिसपर्यां शिक्षिताः शाखिनोऽपि ।।

Nāgānanda 1, 12.

This is not a wonder as the trees reciprocate the love and affection of the *rishis* themselves. The very appearance of the trees and the atmosphere around indicates this. The barks of the trees for preparing their clothes have been cut by the sages with utmost compassion, the larger and the tough parts being left out in their kindness, the water from the cascades is pure like the sky though here and there there are a few broken old water-pots of gourd, scattered here and there by the hermit boys are their tattered waist zones of plaited *Kuśa* grass, even the parrots on the trees here repeat exactly the *Sāma* hymns by constant listening to the utterance of the hermits' intonation of the *Veda*:

बासोऽर्थं दययैव नातिपृथवः कृत्तास्तरूणां त्वच: भग्नालक्ष्यजरत्कमण्डलु नभःस्वच्छं पयो नैर्भरम्। दृश्यन्ते त्रुटितोजिभता च बहुभिर्मेन्ज्यः क्वचिन्मेखला नित्याकर्णनया शुकेन च पदं साम्नामिदं पठ्यते॥

Nāgānanda 1, 11.

Even Vanadevatās in the forest are influenced by the attitude of the sages, their universal love and affection, their heartfelt welcome to the guests, and in every way follow their example. The female ascetic Ātreyī is astonished to find that as she enters the colony of sages presided over by Agastya, Vanadevatās, even from a distance, welcome her with an offering of arghya of tender shoots, fruits and flowers, flowers are scattered in adoration and the utterance is so sweet. Enjoy here this penance grove to your heart's desire. This is indeed a happy day for me. The meeting of the good with those ever so good, a rare occurrence, is only by the power of great merit. Here is the cool shade of the trees, sweet water and food appropriate for hermits, fruit or roots whatever. Everything here is entirely yours and for any of this you depend on none:

अये वनदेवतेयं फलकुसुमगर्भेण पल्लवार्घ्येण दूरान्मामुपतिष्ठते यथेच्छं भोग्यं वो वनमिदमयं मे सुदिवसः सतां सद्भिः सङ्गः कथमपि हि पुण्येन भविष । तरुच्छाया तोयं यदिष तपसो योग्यमशनं फलं वा मूलं वा तदिष न पराधीनिमह वः ॥

Uttararāmacharita 2, 1.

The Vanadevatā continues. The attitude is one of love; restraint in speech, is ever so sweet, ever so modest; the mind by nature is so auspiciously good and this friendship so blameless; the flavour of this is unaltered from the beginning to the end. This is the secret of the guileless attitude of the good:

प्रियप्राया वृत्तिविनयमधुरो वाचि नियम: प्रकृत्या कल्याणी मितरनवगीत: परिचयः। पुरो वा पश्चाद्वा तदिदमविपर्यासितरसं रहस्यं साधृनामनुपधि विशुद्धं विजयते।।

Uttararāmacharita 2, 2.

The *rishis* endowed with such simplicity, kindness, grace and super-celestial power were far beyond the celestials themselves. They were no doubt devout, and a whole row of *rishis* starting with Bhrigu are described by Kālidāsa as waiting in attendance to enquire of Vishņu whether he had had a good sublime slumber *yoganidrā*, for four months on his serpent couch; and the Lord in his turn graces them with his eyes so bright and purifying (Fig. 92):

योगनिद्रन्तविशदैः पावनैरवलोकनैः। भृग्वादीननुगृह्णन्तं सौस्रशायनिकान्मुनीन्।।

Raghuvamśa 10, 14.

But it should not be forgotten that Bhrighu is the same *rishi* who to prove to the world the superior nature of Vishnu in his infinite patience, grace and mercy, went one after the other to Brahmā, Śiva and Vishnu, where the utmost disrespect, kicking on the chest, was shown in the case of Vishnu who, instead of getting ruffled enquired kindly of the *rishi* whether his hard chest had hurt his tender foot:

पादौ ते कोमलौ दिव्यौ मच्छरीरसमागमात्। कियइःखं समापन्नौ न जानामि द्विजोत्तम।।

This so touched Bhrighu that he at once declared Vishnu as the supreme in the trinity.

The rishis were so great that the celestials themselves chose to be born of them. Kaśyapa is the classical instance of a rishi from whom so many celestials were born through Aditi. The couple, Kaśyapa and Aditi, the father and mother of the gods, is graphically described by Kālidāsa through the mouth of Dushyanta. This is the cause as described by the great sages themselves of the twelvefold lustre in which Sūrya manifests himself (dvādaśa ādityas), of the lord of the three worlds who enjoys the highest of the offerings in sacrifices as Indra, and of which even the self-born Paramapurusha or Parmātmā himself thought of taking birth, it is this same Aditi and Kaśyapa, remote from Brahmā only by one generation, namely, Daksha and Marīchi:

प्राहुर्द्वादशघा स्थितस्य मुनयो यत्ते जसः कारणम् भर्तारं भुवनत्रयस्य सपुवे यद्यज्ञभागेश्वरम् । यस्मिन्नात्मभुवः परोऽपि पुरुषश्चके भवस्यास्पदं द्वन्द्वं दक्षमरीचिसंभविमदं तत्स्रष्टुरेकान्तरम् ॥

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 7, 27.

The Vedic story of how Mārtāṇḍa among the forms of Sūrya was left out by Aditi but again was born of her is significant. Sūrya, as Indra had put it to Bharadvāja, is the central important theme of the Veda, himself becoming the guru of Yājñavalkya for the exposition of Śukla Yujarveda, being also of the nature of Trayīvidyā i.e. the three Vedas, the three guṇas and the three mūrtis, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva, is the son of Kaśyapa and Aditi. Indra is Kāśyapeya and Āditeya Upendra or Vāmana, one of the avatāras of Vishṇu, is the offspring

of the same couple. It is Vāmana who encompassed the entire universe as Trivikrama that overcame the might of Bali to restore Indra to power (Fig. 93).

Garuda, the one most powerful not only among birds but even among the celestials, who even on his birth almost mystified the gods that could not understand his power and lustre and at their request reduced his fierce lustre:

एवं स्तुत: सुपर्शस्तु देवै: सर्षिग्रगौस्तदा। तेजस: प्रतिसंहारमात्मनः स चकार ह॥

Mahābhārata 1, 23, 27.

who could easily fight and rout even the Dikpālas and put to shame even Indra, who himself sought his friendship, and the blow of whose *Vajra* could just touch a feather of his wing,

ऋषेमानं करिष्यामि वज्रं यस्यास्थिसम्भवम् । एतत्पत्रं त्यजाम्येकम्

Mahābhārata 1, 33, 20-21.

who in his fight with Airāvata, as Krishņa fought Indra for Pārijāta, could by a single pat fell unconscious the celestial elephant itself on the Raivataka mountain, who could carry the Maṇiparvata mountain itself (Fig. 94) and the Pārijāta tree like a small tulasī plant to Dwārakā, was the son of Kaśyapa by another of his consorts, Vinatā. Aruṇa, lustrous dawn, the precursor of Śurya, is also Vainateya through Kaśyapa.

The great Śesha who carries the entire world on his thousand hoods (Fig. 95), who is the very incarnation of might, endless as Ananta, signifying one of the greatest aspects of Paramātmā, along with other great Nāgas like Takshaka, was born of Kaśyapa through Kadrū, the whole reptile family being called through their mother Kādraveya. By tapasyā Śesha became at the request of Brahmā the great supporter of the world with all its mountains and forests, oceans, villages and cities:

इमां महीं शैलवनोपपन्नां ससागरग्रामिवहारपत्तनाम् । त्वं शेष सम्यक् चिलतं यथावत्संगृह्य तिष्ठस्व यथाचलः स्यात् ॥ Mahābhārata 1, 38, 19. All the Devas are the children of Aditi, Adityas or Aditinandanas.

The moon himself (Fig. 94), though born of the ocean, is also a Rishikumāra born of the eye of Atri:

अथ नयनसमुत्थं ज्योतिरत्रेरिव द्यौ:

Raghuvamśa 2, 75.



Fig. 95. Sesha carries the world on his hoods: after an old traditional woodcut picture from Mahārāshtra.

as Kālidāsa would put it. Mallinātha in explaining the verse of Kālidāsa quotes from the *Harivamsa*. From the eyes of Atri there were ten streams which brightened up the goddesses of the quarters who bore the foetus in ten parts with great joy. It was however a difficult task for them, and finally the moon in ten parts fell from them, lighting up the entire world with his divine radiance:

नेत्राभ्यां परिसुस्नाव दशधा द्योतयन्दिशः। तं गर्भं दशधा हृष्टा दिशो देव्यो दघुस्ततः।। समेत्य धारयामासु र्न चैतास्तमशक्नुवन् । स ताभ्यः सहसैवाथ दिग्भ्यो गर्भः प्रभान्वितः ॥ , पपात भावयँ लोकाम्छीतांशुः सुरभावनः ।

Harivamsa

The Chandella kings whose full name is Chandratreyas are so called, being of the lunar race, the moon being born of Atri and called Atreya.

The detailed story is given in the Harivamsa. The revered sage Atri long ago performed severe penance for three thousand years by celestial reckoning with unwinking eyes and with complete selfcontrol. His body not only lit up, but like the milky ocean, became completely ambrosial. From his eyes, there were ten streams of ambrosia that flowed into the ten quarters filling the sky with light. The damsels personifying the quarters bore this foetus with great difficulty till it became the luminous moon that occupied the sky. With this appearance of the moon, there was a quake in the entire universe. Brahmā in his Vedic chariot voked to a thousand horses took him in it. The celestials and sages all honoured him with praise and prayed for his increase in light. Thus he was successful in winning over the entire universe. The moon himself performed penance for myriads of years, and by his lustre created the most potent medicinal herbs. Brahmā, made him the king of the Brāhmanas by a regular royal coronation. That is why the hemistich,

तस्मात्सोमराजानो ब्राह्मणाः

Taittirīya Samhitā

He became the beloved of the daughters of Daksha and shone in the Rāyasūya sacrifice:

स्रितिश्चचार भगवान्मौने मुनिवरः पुरा।
तपो दश सहस्राणि दिव्यानि त्रौणि निश्चलः ।।
तस्याथ निर्निमेषस्य शरीरं ब्रह्मचारिणः ।
स्रभूद्व्यामृतमयं कान्तं दुग्धोदधेरिव।।
ततः सुस्राव नेत्राभ्यामत्रेस्तदृशधा स्नुतम् ।
अमृतं दिक्षु दशसु प्रभासंपूरिताम्बरम् ।।
वृतं ददृशभिर्गर्भे दिग्भिर्यत्नेन दुःसहम् ।
सोमत्वमाप्तं सहसा पपात भुवि भास्वरम् ॥

तिस्मित्रिपतिते तूर्णं किम्पते भुवनत्रये।
रथे वेदमये ब्रह्मा सहस्राश्चे तमादषे॥
तं रथस्थं मुनिवरा देवास्त्रैलोक्यभावनम्।
तुष्टुवुस्तेजसो वृद्ध्यं सर्वजिद्येन सोऽभवत्॥
वत्सराणां चकारासौ पूर्णं पद्मश्चतं तपः।
उत्पन्नस्तेजसा तस्य दिग्यौषिधसुष्मागमः॥
राजा राज्याभिषिक्तोऽथ ब्रह्मणा ब्राह्मणािषपः।
वल्लभो दक्षपुत्रीणां राजसूये रराज सः॥

Bhāratamañjarī, Harīvamśa 182, 189.

In the Vishnupurāna, there are three sons of Atri mentioned of Anasūyā, one is Soma or the moon, the next Durvāsa and the third Dattātreya:

श्रनसूया तथैवात्रेर्जज्ञे पुत्रानकल्मषान् । सोमं दुर्वाससं चैव दत्तात्रेयं च योगिनम् ॥

Vishnupurāna 1, 10, 8-9.

In the Kanakadhārāstotra, Lakshmī is specifically called Bhārgavandanā by Śankara (Fig 97). May the lovely form of the daughter of the sage Bhrigu, the mother of the entire universe, that shines on the chest of the foe of Kaiṭabha, beautiful in its dark complexion like trailing clouds of glory, even as the golden streak of lightning on dark laden cumulus, confer on me every good:

कालाम्बुदालि लिलतोरिस कैटमारे-धाराधरे स्फुरित या तटिदङ्गनेव। मातुः समस्तजगतां महनीयमूर्ति-भंद्राणि मे दिशतु भागवनन्दनाया:॥

Kanakadhārāstotra 6,95.

It is explained by Parāśara in the Vishņupurāṇa how Lakshmī is the daughter of Bhṛigu. Originally she was born of Bhṛighu and later of the ocean through the effort of the Devas and the Asuras who churned the ocean for Amṛita:

भृगोः स्यात्यां समुत्पन्ना श्री: पुर्वमुदघेः पुनः । देवदानवयत्नेन प्रसूताऽमृतमन्थने ॥ एवं यथा जगत्स्वामी देवराजो जनादंनः । अवतारं करोत्येष तथा श्रीस्तत्सहायिनी ॥

Vishnupurāna 1, 9, 138-139.

Bhṛigu through his wife Khyāti had a daughter Lakshmī, the consort of Vishņu, and two sons Dhātā and Vidhātā. Āyati and Niyati the daughters of Meru were married to Dhātā and Vidhātā. Two sons Prāṇa and Mṛikaṇḍu were born to them. The son of sage Mṛikaṇḍu is Mārkaṇḍeya. He had also another son Vedaśirā. Prāṇa had two sons Dyutimān and Rājavān. This is the detailed description of Bhṛigu's immediate family:

भृगोः ख्यात्यां समुत्पन्ना लक्ष्मीविष्णुपरिग्रहः।
तथा धातृविधातारौ ख्यात्यां जातौ सुतौ भृगो:।।
आयतिनियतिऋष्वे व मेरो: कन्ये महात्मनः।
भार्ये धातृविधात्रोस्ते तयोर्जातौ सुतावुभौ।।
प्राणऋष्वे मृकण्डुश्च मार्कण्डेयो मृकण्डुतः।
ततो वेदशिरा जज्ञे प्राणस्यापि सुतं श्रुणु।।
प्राणस्य द्युतिमान्पुत्रो राजवांश्च ततोऽभवत्।

Vishnupurāņa 1, 10, 2-5.

It is interesting that at Uttiramerur there is a temple of the eighth-ninth century A.D. built by the Pallava king Dantivarman with a fine vimāna known as ashtāngavimāna containing some very beautiful and rather unusual iconographic forms as large decorative panels. There is a Sarasvatī that would be normally taken to be Gajalakshmī, as she is bathed by elephants. While it is a bath of fortune and prosperity for Śrī, it is a bath of wisdom by elephants symbolic of wisdom also. Another and, for our purpose more important, is Bhrigu the great sage who is among the greatest devotees of Vishnu as well as the father of Śrī or Lakshmī in one of her avatāras (Fig 98) earlier than when she was born out of the milky ocean kshīrasāgara, when the ocean became her father. Bhrigu is among the sages receiving the grace of Vishnu as he rises from his yoganidrā as earlier noted. An inscription here is of special interest as pointed out by Ganapati Sthapati as it helps to understand the full import of the construction of the temple itself by the architect Parameśvara of the village Pataka with the aid of those in the village learned in the text of the Agamas and its practice. The inscription helps us to understand the text of Marīchi Samhitā which details the design of the vimāna which is fully answered in this well-designed and executed temple.

Kapila the great sage was born of Kardama and Devahūti.

The story is given in the *Bhāgavata* and *Harivaṁśa*. Kardama, himself one of the lords of creation, *Prajāpati*, born of Brahmā, performed severe austerities for thousands of years on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. His consort Devahūti, the daughter of the emperor Manu and Śatarūpā, by devout worship of the Lord as directed by her husband had the good fortune to have the Lord himself born to her as Kapila to propagate the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy:

निजभर्तृगिरा भवन्निषेवानिरतायामथ देव देवहूत्याम् । कपिलस्त्वमजायथा जनानां प्रथियव्यन् परमात्मतत्विवद्याम् ॥

Nārāyaṇīyam 14, 9.

In the Nārāyaṇīyam, a fifteenth century abridgement of the Bhāgavata in kāvya form by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭapāda of Kerala, the tenets of Sāṅkhya are explained in the simplest form in ten verses through the mouth of sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti. Prakṛiti (the illusory world around), ahaṁkāra (ego), five tanmātras (subtle elements like form, taste, sound, smell and touch), five bhūtas (the major elements earth, water, light, wind and sky), hṛit (mind), ten indriyas (sensory organs) and Purusha (the Primal), these twentyfive tattvas or aspects analysed and properly understood lead to liberation from the veil of Prakṛiti.

प्रकृतिमहदहंकाराश्च मात्राश्च भूता-न्यिप हृदपि दशाक्षी पूरुषः पञ्चितशः। इति विदितविभागो मुच्यते ऽ सौ प्रकृत्या कपिलतनुरिति त्वं देवहूत्ये न्यगादीः॥

Nārāyanīyam 15, 2.

The refrain of the ten verses summarizing Kapila's philosophy to his mother runs, kapilatanur iti tvam devehūtyai nyagādīḥ, the poet Bhaṭṭapāda addressing Krishṇa himself.

After this Kapila took leave of his mother and left for performing penance. It is this preaching of Kapila to his mother that accounts for the Buddhist parallel of Buddha's ascent to heaven to teach his mother. It is while Kapila was doing penance in the nether world, when accidentally the horse stolen by Indra purposely left near the hermitage of this same sage, misled the princes, sons of Sagara, to rush in a body to attack him, that they were reduced to

ashes by the anger of Kapila. This story has been given in the Vishņu-purāṇa and the Vāyupurāṇa as well as in the Bhāgavata. Indra warns Raghu not to follow the footsteps of Sagara's sons who were reduced to ashes by Kapila:

अतोयमश्वः किपलातुकारिणा पितुस्त्वदीयस्य मयापहारितः। अलं प्रयत्नेन तवात्र मा निधाः पदं पदव्यां सगरस्य संततेः।।

Raghuvamia

Raghuvamśa 3, 15.

There is a beautiful delineation in sculpture of the sons of Sagara attacking Kapila seated in meditation on a pillar from the Virūpāksha temple at Paṭṭaḍakal (Fig. 99) in the sequence of the story of Gangā as Bhagīratha brings her down to the earth and the netherworld to purify the ashes of his ancestors and help them reach heaven. Probably the most magnificent representation of Kapila seated at ease in what is generally called the mahārājalīlā pose, with the horse beside him, is an early rock-cut one of great aesthetic eminence at Anurādhāpura in Ceylon (Fig. 6). In the Vaikuṇṭha form of Vishṇu, the most significant aspects of Vishṇu are represented by four heads (Fig. 100). The most important is the normal face of grace of Vishṇu which is the central facing one. To the proper right is the lionine face of Narasimha which is considered the most important avatāra. The porcine face to the left is the next in the order and to the back is Kapila's face with knit brow exhibiting anger:

सौम्यं तु वदनं पूर्वं नारसिंहं तु दक्षिणम्। कापिलं पश्चिमं वक्त्रं तथा वाराहमुत्तरम्।।

Vishnudharmottara 3, 44, 11-12

This is a favourite form in Kashmir and Nepal Among the forms of Vishņu as a sage, Kapila, Naranārāyana, Rishabha and Vāmana are famous.

Aśvaghosha gives the greatness of sage Gautama from whose family he mentions Kapila as a worthy scion seer and then goes into ecstacies over the greatness of Kapila himself. Though Kapila is mentioned in the Svetāśvataropanishad, he is unknown to the Rigveda. Gotama who is prominenthy mentioned in the Rigveda and known as the father of Nodhas and Vāmadeva is the father of Śatānanda only in the Rāmāyana. Here are other descendants of his

like the Vājaśravases, Aruṇa, Uddālaka Āruṇi, Hāridrumata and others. So Kapila as of the line of Gautama given by Aśvaghosha is a version that differs from that of the *Bhāgavata* where he is the son of Prajāpati Kardama and Devahūtī. Aśvaghosha affirms Kapila as the teacher of Sāmkhya which Alāra Kālāma expounded to the young prince Siddhārtha turned a monk impressed by his brilliance:

इत्यराडः कुमारस्य माहात्म्यादेव चोदित:। संक्षिप्तं कथयांचके स्वस्य शास्त्रस्य निश्चयम्।।

Buddhacharita 12, 15.

This is the reason for the Śākyas, Buddha included, styling themselves Gautamas after their guru Kapila's gotra:

> तेषां मुनिरुपाध्यायो गौतम: कपिलोऽभवत् । गुरुगोत्रादत: कौत्सास्ते भवन्ति स्म गौतमाः ॥

> > Saundarananda 1, 22.

And Kapila is eulogised as the best of the righteous ones, great in penance like another descendent of Gautama, Kakshīvān, whose incessent glory of penance blazed forth like the heat of the sun and attained its perfection by its steady progress, like Kaśyapa who milked the essence of the realisation of the self in the utterances of the Veda, like Vasishtha amidst his disciples great in penance, who by his innate superiority was only next to the sage Dīrghatapas and a third in the category of intellectuals like Šukra and Bṛihaspati.

गौतमः किपलो नाम मुनिर्घमभृतां वरः।
बभूव तपिस श्रान्तः कक्षीवानिव गौतमः।।
अशिश्रियद्यः सततं दीप्तं काश्यपवत्तपः।
अशिश्राय च तदृद्धौ सिद्धि काश्यपवत्पराम्।।
हिवःषु यश्च स्वात्मार्थं गामघुक्षद्वसिष्ठवत्।
तपःशिष्टेषु शिष्येषु गामघुक्षद्वसिष्ठवत्।
महात्म्याद्दीर्घतपसो यो द्वितीय इवाभवत्।
नृतीय इव यश्चाभूत्काव्याङ्किरसयोधिया।।

Saundarananda 1, 1-2.

Paraśurāma another great sage is the son of Jamadagni, born again in the Bhrighu family. That the lord chose Jamadagni as his parent is not without reason. As a sage he was also of the highest order. It was a favourite hobby for him to shoot a target and his wife,

the princess Renukā, used to bring him back the arrows. Scorched by the rays of the sun at noon in this act, she suffered so much that Jamadagni enquired why she looked so exhausted, and took up his bow to punish the sun for tormenting her with his heat. The legend given in the *Mahābhārata* is interesting as Sūrya himself in the form of an old Brāhmaṇa is described to have come and advised Jamadagni to use the umbrella and sandals and not expect him to move away from *rita* or the order of the universe, as it was his nature to be hot. And that is the origin of the parasol and footwear.

Kubera one of the Dikpālas excited the wonder of the rākshasa Sumālī and his daughter Kaikasī who was accompanying her father. She looked as beautiful as Lakshmī herself though she was not lotusborn like the goddess. Noticing Kubera going in his aerial car to meet his father Paulastya, the great sage who was performing penance in his hermitage, and amazed at the grandeur of the lord of wealth and his good fortune to be born of so great a sage, Sūmālī pointed him out to his daughter, then in the bloom of her youth, and suggested that she should be given in wedlock to the same great rishi so that she could have children that could boast of the glory of Kubera. He suggested that she should be the spouse of Viśravas, son of sage Pulastya (Fig. 101-102):

तदपश्यत्स गच्छन्तं पुष्पकेन धनेश्वरम् ॥
गच्छन्तं पितरं द्रष्टुं पुलस्त्यतनयं विभुम् ॥
तं दृष्ट्वामरेशसंकाशं स्वच्छन्दं तपनोपमम् ॥
इत्येव चिन्तयामास राक्षसानां महामितः ॥
अथान्नवीत्सुतां रक्षः कैकसीं नाम नामतः ॥
पुत्रि प्रदानकालोऽयं यौवनं ते ऽतिवर्तते ॥
प्रत्याख्यानाच्च भीतैस्त्वं न वरैश्च प्रतिगृह्यसे ॥
सा त्वं मुनिवरं श्रेष्ठं प्रजापितकुलोद्भवम् ॥
भज विश्रवसं पुत्रि पौलस्त्यं वरय स्वयम् ॥
ईदृशास्ते भविष्यन्ति पुत्राः पुत्रि न संशयः ॥
तेजसा भास्करसमो यादृशोऽयं धनेश्वरः ॥

Rāmāyana 7, 9, 3-12.

Thus Kubera appeared the model of a grandson for Sumālī whose daughter he wanted to marry to that same *rishi* to have progeny that would equal Kubera. This very high status of Kubera, as not

only the lord of wealth and a Lokapāla but also as a friend of Śiva, is due to his origin from a very great *rishi* whom he was ever in the habit of every morning visiting in his simple hermitage for offering him his obeisance.

Mātangī (Fig. 103), the goddess of music, four-armed, beautified by the crescent moon tucked on her braid, and crimson in colour like saffron, who plays the vīṇā with a rare melody, conversing at the same time softly with her sportive parrot perched on her shoulder, is the daughter of the sage Matanga. The daughter of sage Matanga plays the ruby-set lute, leisurely in her high state, sweet in her utterance of musical notes, azure like the blue sapphire (indranīla), her body delicate and limbs soft. Her description occurs in the first few verses of the Śyāmalādanḍaka:

माणिक्यवीणामुपलालयन्तीं मदालसां मञ्जुलवाग्विलासाम्। माहेन्द्रनीलद्युतिकोमलाङ्कीं मातङ्गकन्यां मनसा स्मरामि।। जय मातङ्गतनये जय नीलोत्पलद्युते। जय सङ्गीतरसिके जय लीलाशुकप्रिये।।

Śyamalādandaka 1, 4.

The river Kāverī is called Kaverakanyā, and is the daughter of the *rishi* Kavera. Similarly Godāvarī is called Gautamī because of her association with the sage Gautama. The Kauśikī river is the sister of Kauśika that is no other than the *Brahmarishi* Viśvāmitra. Gangā herself is the daughter of the sage Jahnu having emerged from his ear after he had sipped her up when she was flooding his hermitage (Fig. 30). That is why Kālidāsa describes her as

जह्नोः कन्यां सगरतनयस्वर्गसोपानपङ्तिम्

Meghadūta 1,50.

She is not only the daughter of Jahnu but also the celestial ladder leading the sons of Sagara reduced to ashes by Kapila's anger to heaven itself.

Revā or Narmadā herself is the daughter of Soma, the moon who is himself the son of Atri, and thus is the granddaughter of one of the greatest sages. According to another account she is the daughter of a sage Mekala. Yamunā is similarly granddaughter of

Kaśyapa since she is the daughter of Sūrva and sister of Yama. Yama himself, son of Sūrya, is the grandson of Kaśyapa. Siwilarly the Asvins. There are also instances of how some of the rishis were adopted by the celestials as their sons as for instance Angiras who was adopted by Agni as his first son. Agni himself is more or less a purohita, a priest, is a sage, is shown sporting a beard and with attributes that would make him look a sage more than any other. It is he that officiates in all the marriages even of the highest celestials like, for instance, Siva's marriage with Parvatī, holding hands pānigrahana, as bride and groom in wedlock as companions. He is the witness of the offering of parched rice (laighoma) and the walking of seven steps together as companions in life (saptapadi) all in and around the flames and he is śuchi and pāvaka, so pure and purifying (Fig 104). The seven rishis themselves are aspects of Agni as seen in the pūrnāhuti mantra, sapta jihvāh, the seven flames, sapta rishayah. The rishis specially devoted themselves to the worship of the sun and the fire next to the worship of the abode of the Veda, Brahmā himself.

Urvaśī of great renown, the most beautiful, and surpassing all the celestial nymphs that were born of the milky ocean as it was churned, is a nymph of special importance in that she shamed the rest, herself born, as already referred, from the thigh of Nārāyaṇa, Vishṇu himself as the sage par excellence (Fig 20):

ऊरूद्भवा नरसखस्य मुने: सुरस्त्री

Vikramorvaśiya 1, 4.

The *rishis* so great in every way had never any exaggerated notion of themselves. They had their own ideas of values and the instance is very clear in that of Chyavana the great *rishi* who had equated himself with a cow (Fig. 105) so far as his own value was concerned. The sage was performing severe penance in midstream under the waters of the river at the confluence of Gangā and Yamunā. Around him frolicked innumerable fishes amidst which he stayed. The fishermen cast their net and had a rich and heavy haul. What was their surprise when they found the sage Chyavana in their haul of fishes: They were greatly perturbed, but the sage reassured them and not only excused them for what they thought was a great offence of theirs but also asked them to go and request the king of the realm

Nahusha, to give them his cost, as, being caught along with the fishes he was entitled to equal treatment with the fishes and was expected to fetch a price for the fishermen:

प्राणोत्सर्गं विसर्गं वा मत्स्यैयिस्याम्यहं सह। समवासान्नोत्सहे त्यक्तुं सिललेऽज्युषितानहम्।।

Mahābhārata 13, 50, 26-27.

The king hurried to the spot and offered first a thousand, ten thousand, then a million, a half of his kindom and finally in despair even his entire realm. But still the sage Chyavana shook his head and said it was not his price. The king was at his wit's end, when a wise sage counselled him to offer a cow as the value of the sage:

सर्वे विवर्णवदना नहुपाय न्यवेदयन्।
... प्लवो भव महर्षे त्वं कुरु मूल्यविनिश्चयम्।।
नहुपस्य वचः श्रुत्वा गविजात: प्रतापवान्।
उवाच हर्षयन् सर्वानमात्यान्पर्थिवं च तम्।।
ब्राह्मणानां गवां चैत कुलमेकं द्विधा कृतम्।
एकत्र वेदास्तिष्ठिन्त हविरन्यत्र तिष्ठिति॥
अनर्षेयं महाराज द्विजो वर्णेषु चोत्तम:।
गावश्च पुरुषव्याघ्र गौर्मू त्यं परिकल्प्यताम्।।

Mahābhārata 13, 51, 20-22.

The king gladly offered a cow and Chyavana nodded his head in approval as that was the correcet value, a cow more than a kingdom:

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ विप्रर्षे गवा कीतोऽसि धर्मत:। एतं मूल्यमहं मन्ये तव धर्मभृतां वर।। उत्तिष्ठाम्येष राजेन्द्र सम्यक्कीतोऽस्मि तेऽनध। गोभिस्तुल्यं न पश्यामि धनं किञ्चिदिहोच्यते।।

Mahābhārata 13, 51, 25-26.

The sage Chyavana, a repository of the *Vedas* and the cow, a repository of havis for yāga, were equated, and the rishi evaluated himself in that simple manner. The rishis like the brimming vessel filled to the mouth were ambrosial treasures, most simple, existing only for the welfare of the world, deep and noble and never noisy like empty

drums, silently achieving the welfare of the world, nay, the universe by the glory of their $tapasy\bar{a}$, ever praying for the well-being of the bipeds and quadrupeds.

शं नो अस्तु द्विपदे । शं चतुष्पदे । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

and for their reckoning through their ears the good of the world, seeing with their eyes everything good:

भद्रं कर्गोभिः श्रुगुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

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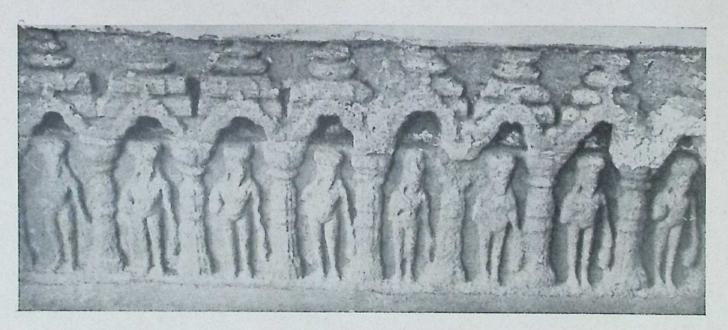


Fig. 1. Saptarishis and Arundhatī, Eastern Chāļukya, 10th century A.D., Bhīmeśvara Temple, Drākshārāma.

T.N. Golaganathan.



Fig. 2. Atri and Anasūyā lovingly receiving Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaņa, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Deogarh.



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Fig. 4. Agni with flaming hair jyotishkeśa, Chola, 10th century A.D., Madras Museum.



Fig. 5. Siddhārtha's miraculous birth, 9th century A.D., Deo Paṭān, Nepal.

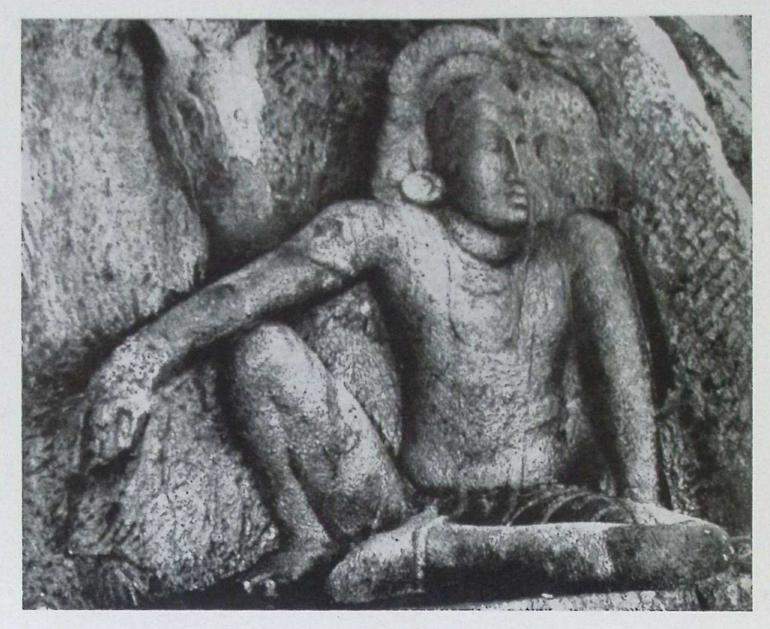


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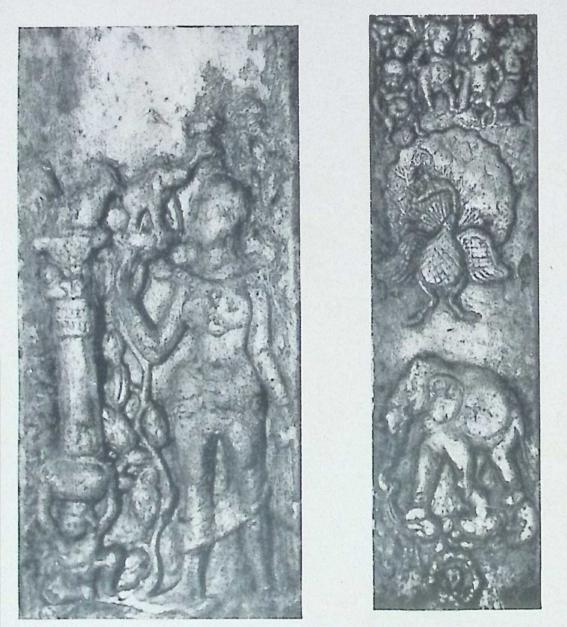






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Fig. 9. Krishna Devakīputra as Gītāchārya discoursing to Ārjuna, Reddi, 14th century A.D., Pushpagiri, Āndhra Pradesh.

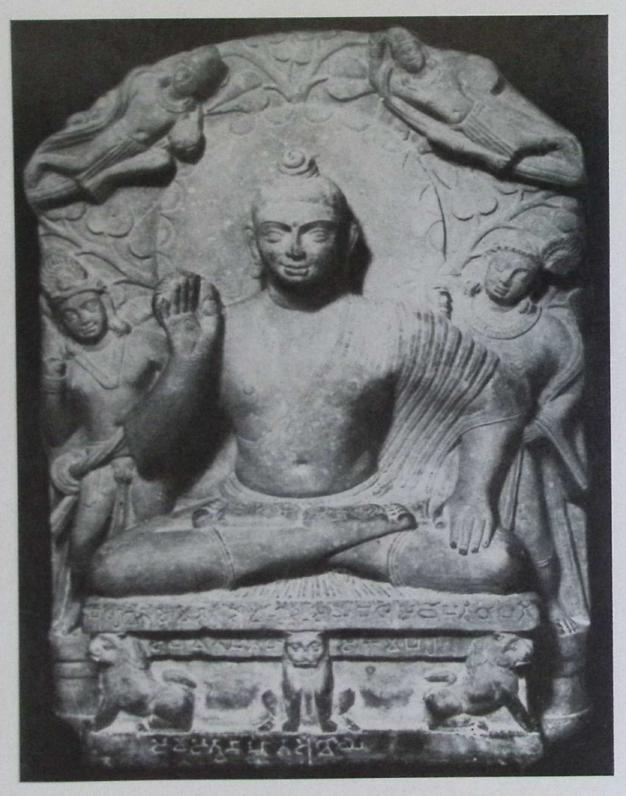


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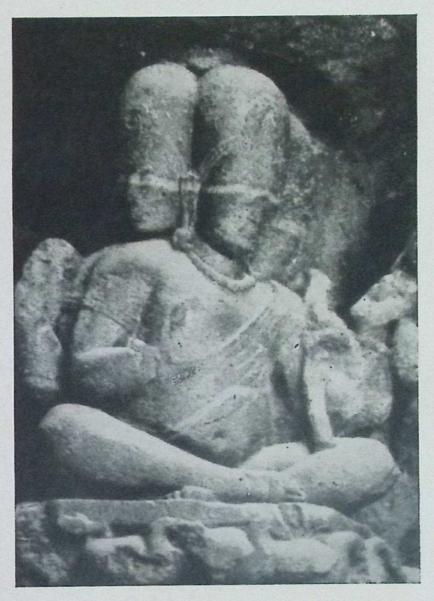


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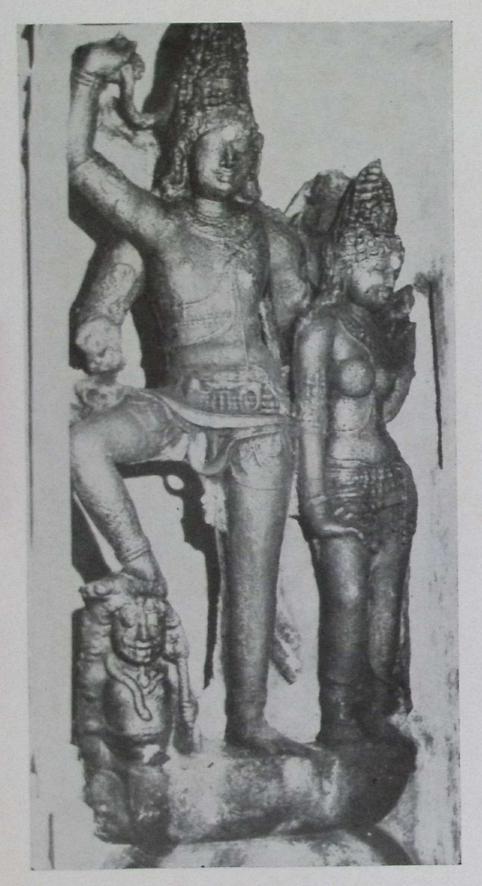


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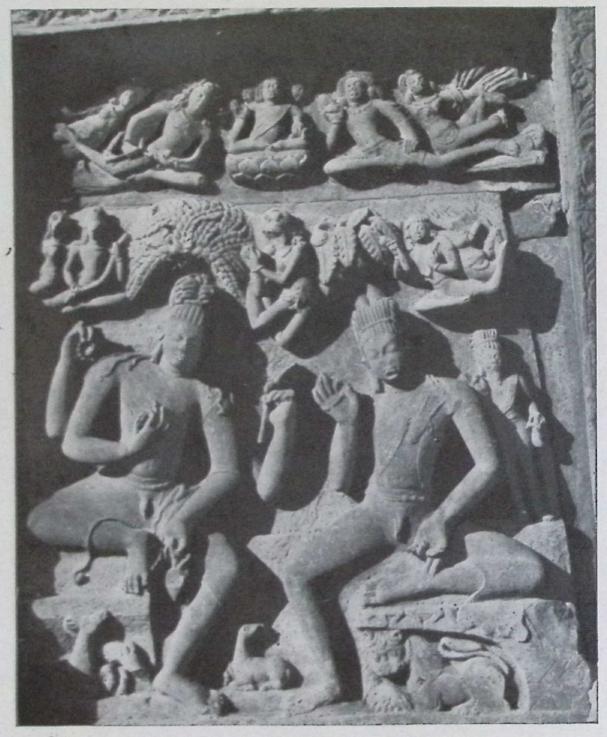


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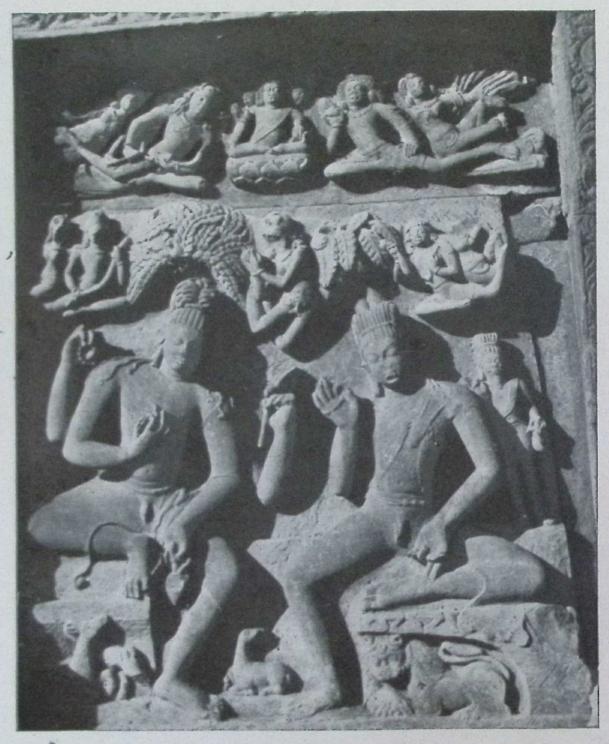


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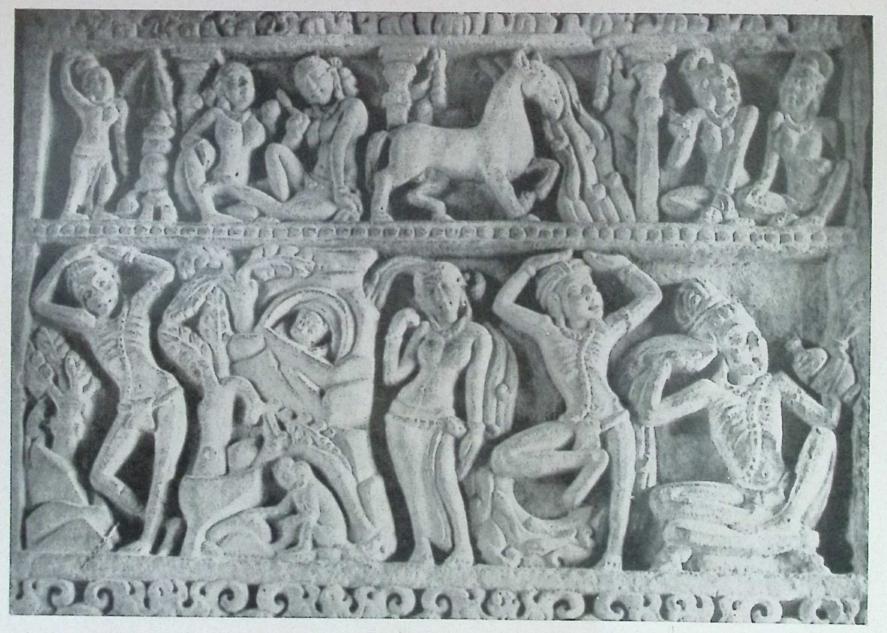


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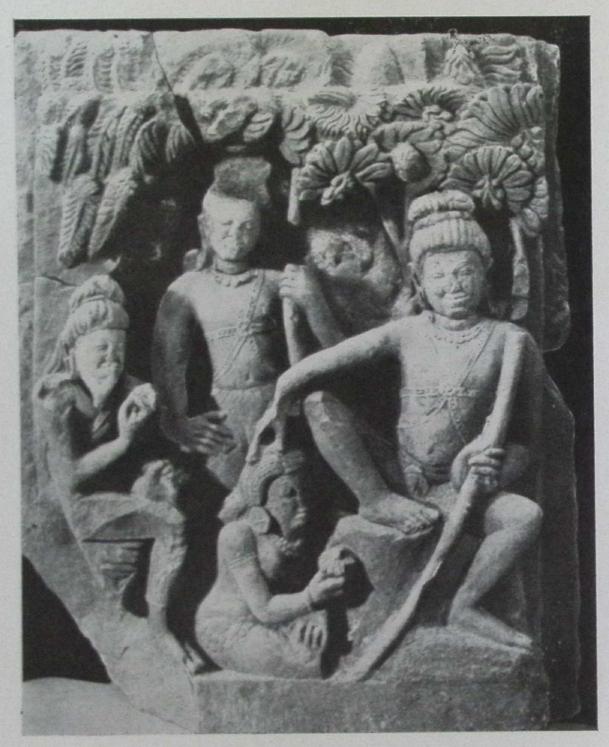


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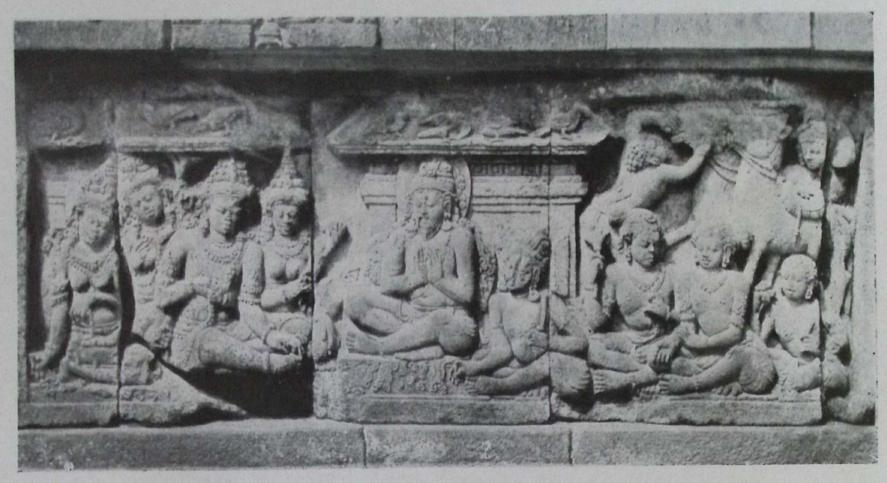


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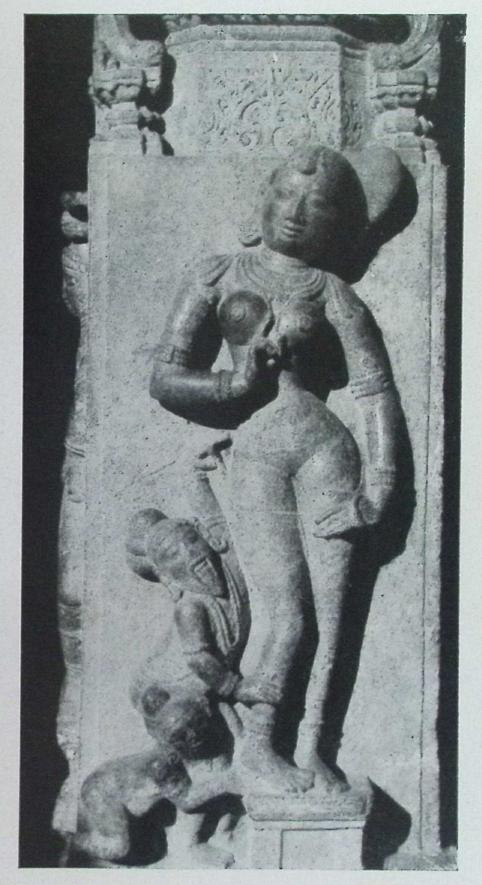


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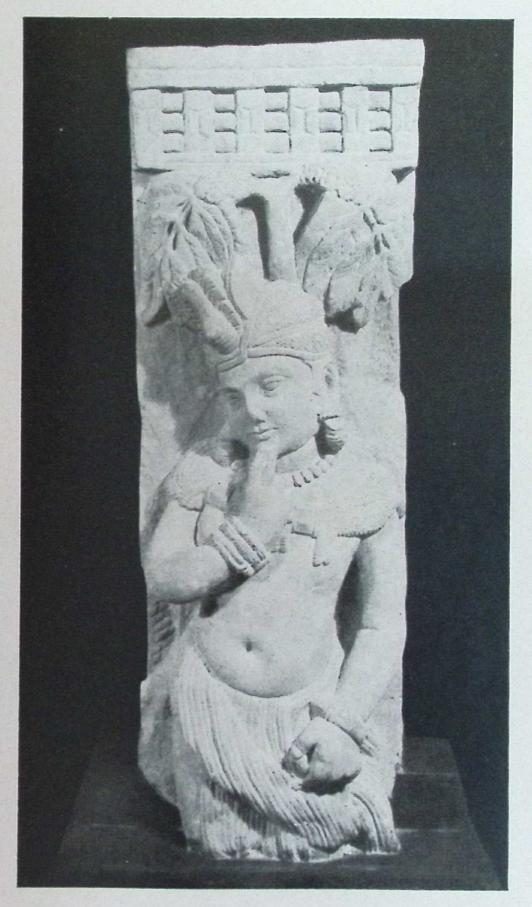


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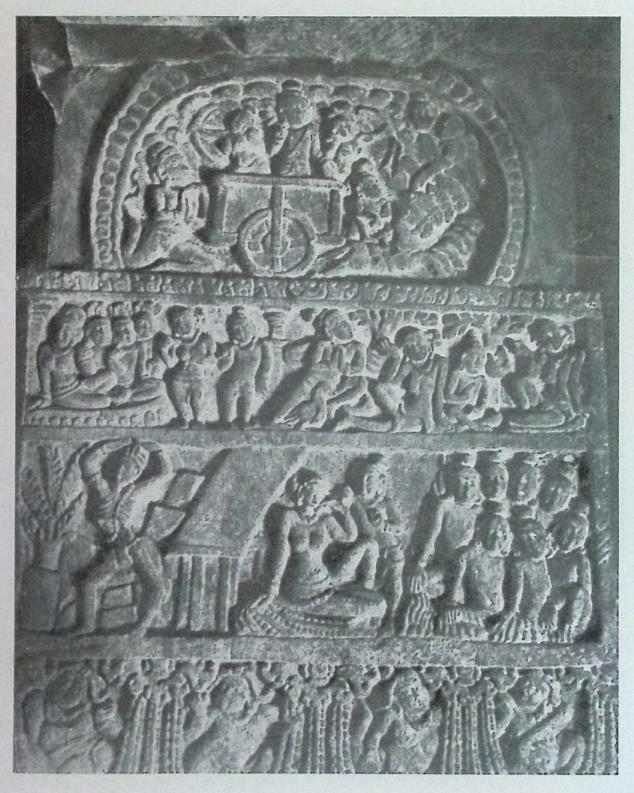


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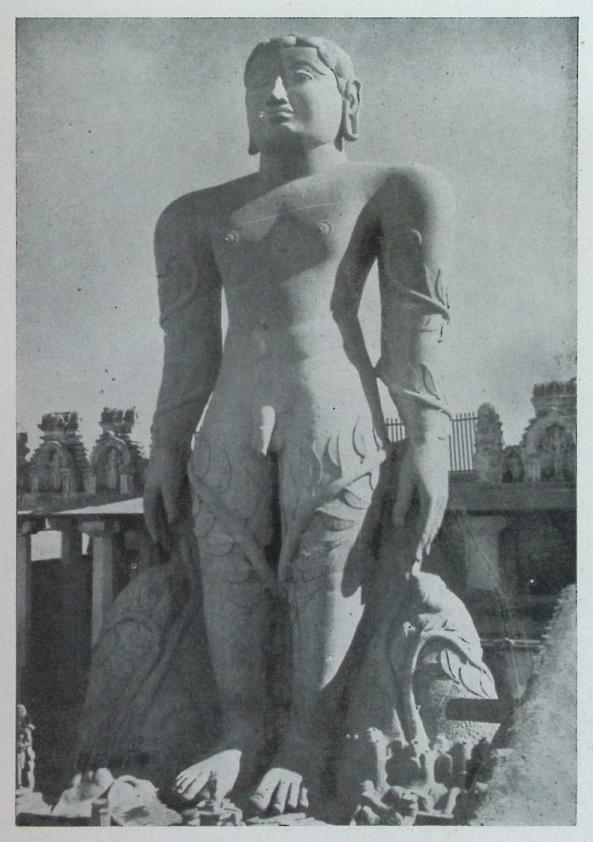


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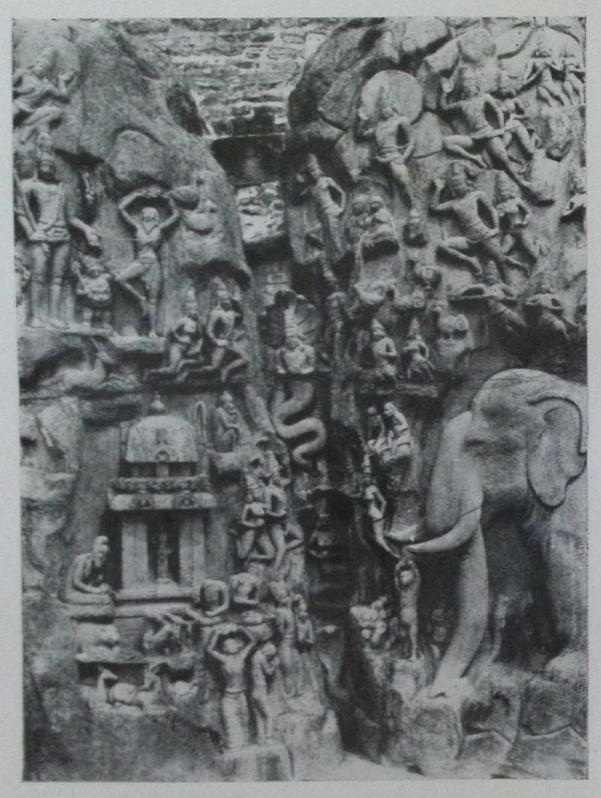


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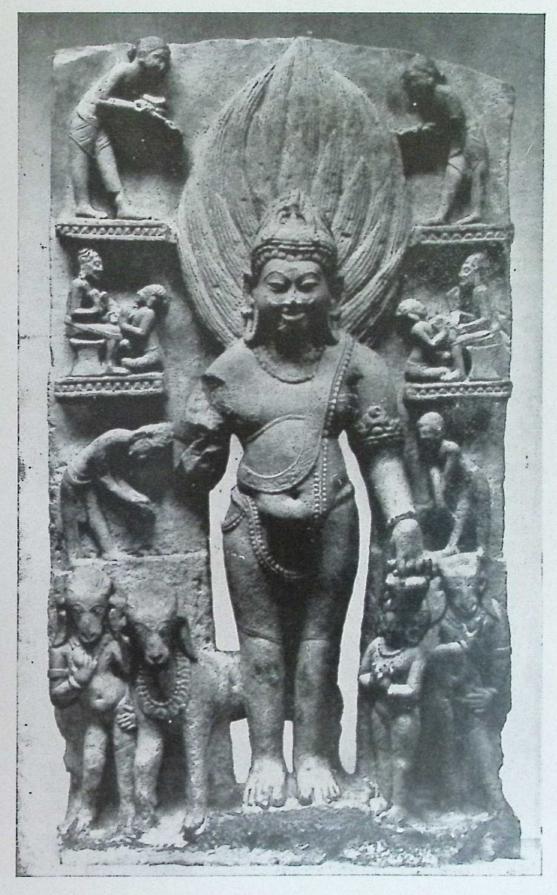


Fig. 64. Agni and *Brahmachārī*, Gurjara Pratīhāra, 9th century A.D., Cleveland Museum.

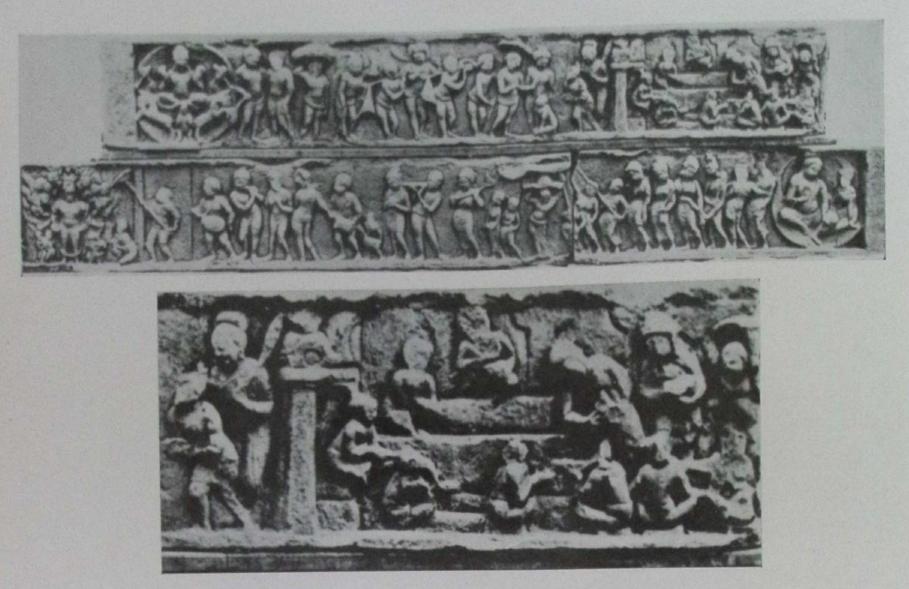


Fig. 65. Feeding of pupils after mādhyandina sandhyā in a frieze, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Garhwā, Lucknow Museum.



Fig. 66. Pupils studying Vedas from their master the sage in the āśrama, early Western Chāļukya, 8th century A.D., Paţṭaḍakal.

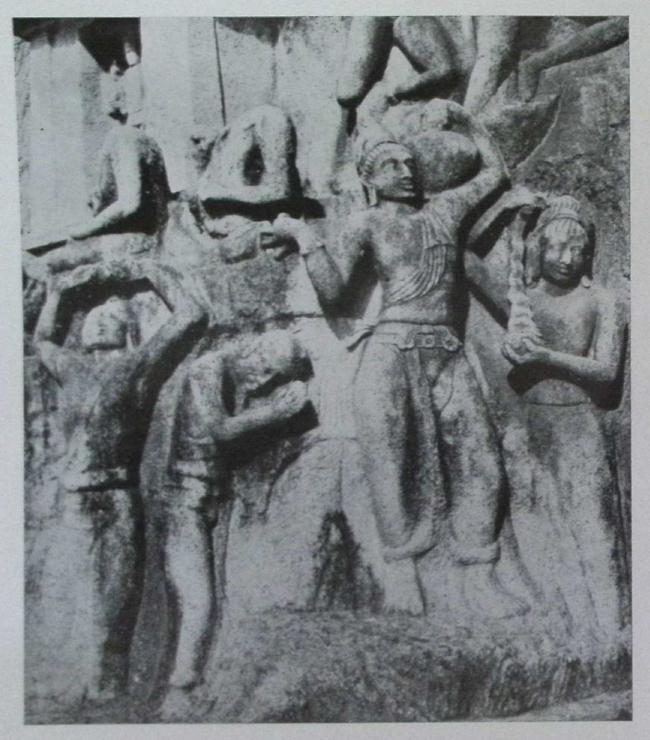


Fig. 67. Close up of anushthana of hermit boys, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahabalipuram.



Fig. 68. Dīrghatapas instructing pupils in forest glade, Śunga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 69. Yājñavalkya following the sun repeating the Śukla Yajurveda, early Western Chāļukya, 8th century A.D., Paṭṭaḍakal.

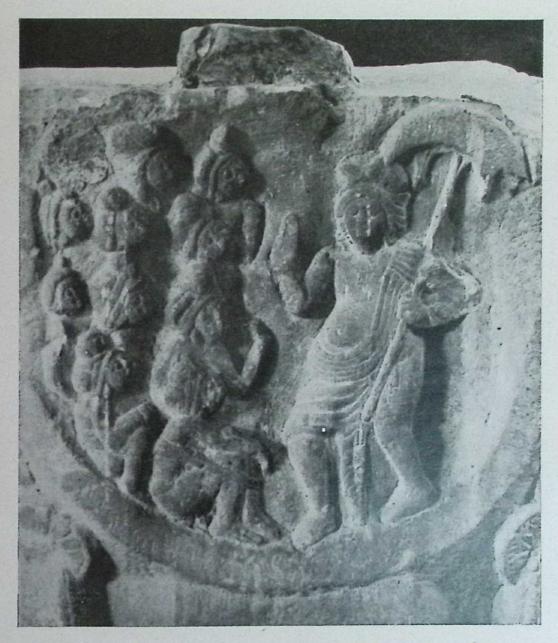


Fig. 70. Medallion showing the teacher admonishing pupils, Śuṅga, 2nd-1st century B.C., Mathurā Museum.

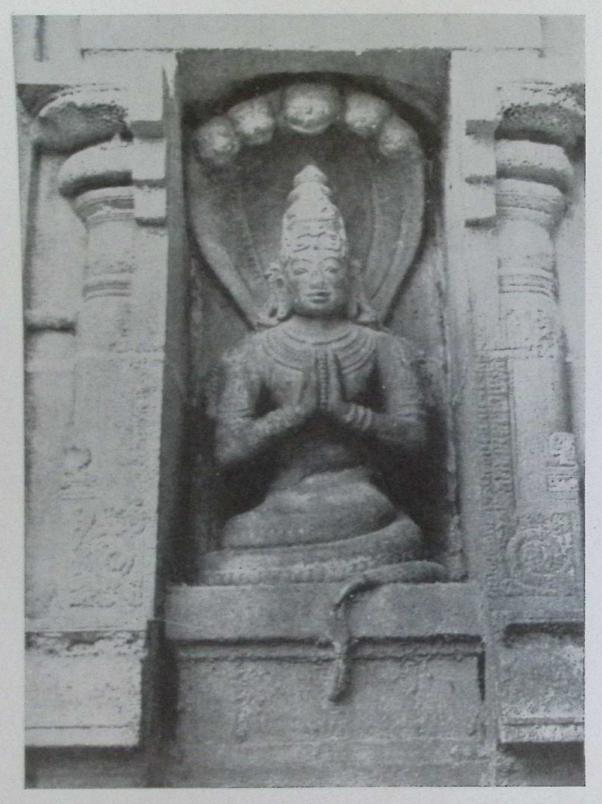


Fig. 71. Patañjali, Chola, 12th-13th century A.D., Națarāja temple, Chidambaram.



Fig. 72. Vyāghrapāda, Nāyak, 17th century A.D., Temple Museum, Śrīraṅgam.



Fig. 73. Bhringi, Chola, 11th century A.D., Gangaikondacholapuram.



Fig. 74. Bharata instructed by Śiva, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.



Fig. 75. Tandu instructed by Śiva, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.



Fig. 76. Bṛihaspati and Śukra in Navagraha panel, Gupta, 6th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta.





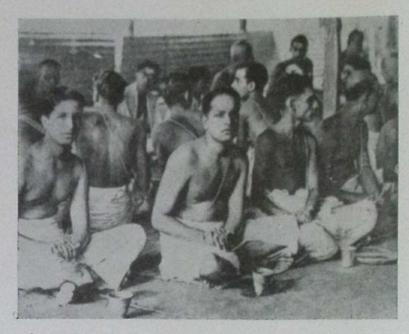


Fig. 77. Pupils studying the Vedas after mahāsankalpa, Śailendra, 8th century A.D., Barabudur, Indonesia.



Fig. 78. Sudāma in his tumbled down hut and unaware of poverty's consequences, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., National Museum.



Fig. 80. Cupid reduced to ashes for shooting flowers on Siva in meditation, Chola, 12th century A.D., Dārāsuram.



Fig. 81. Rāma expounding the highest philosophic truth, late Chera, 18th century A.D., Kerala.



Fig. 82. Märkandeyänugrahaműrti, Räshtrakűta, 8th century A.D., Ellora.



Fig. 83. Kālāri, Choļa, 1000 A.D., Rājārajeśvara Temple, Tañjāvur.



Fig. 84. Mārkaņdeya and Paramātmā Vishņu as a child on banyan leaf, Kāngrā school, 18th century A.D., Chaņdīgarh Museum.



Fig. 85. Medallion illustrating the first act of Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhīṭa, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

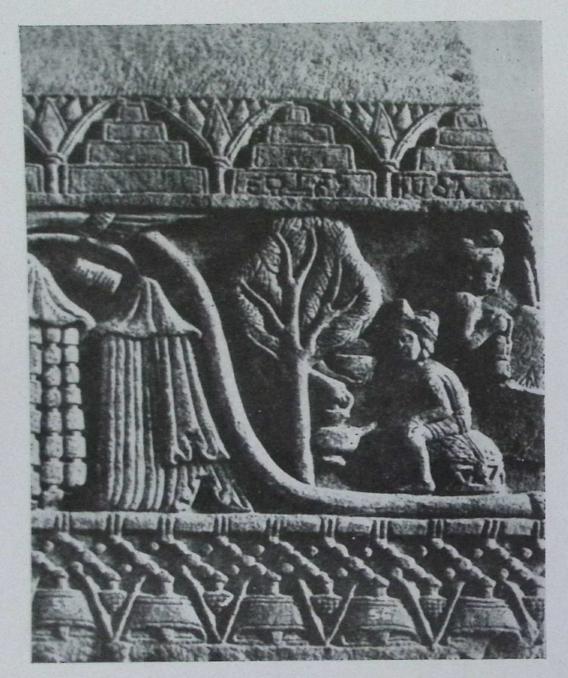


Fig. 86. Vanadevatā with hand peeping from tree bough offering food and water to guests, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 87. Arrow in the body of the innocent deer like fire in cotton wool, Chandella, 10th century A.D., Khajurāho.



Fig. 88. Rīshi near his hermitage in friendly conversation with birds, snake and deer, Śuńga, 2nd century B.C., Mathurā, Mathurā Museum.

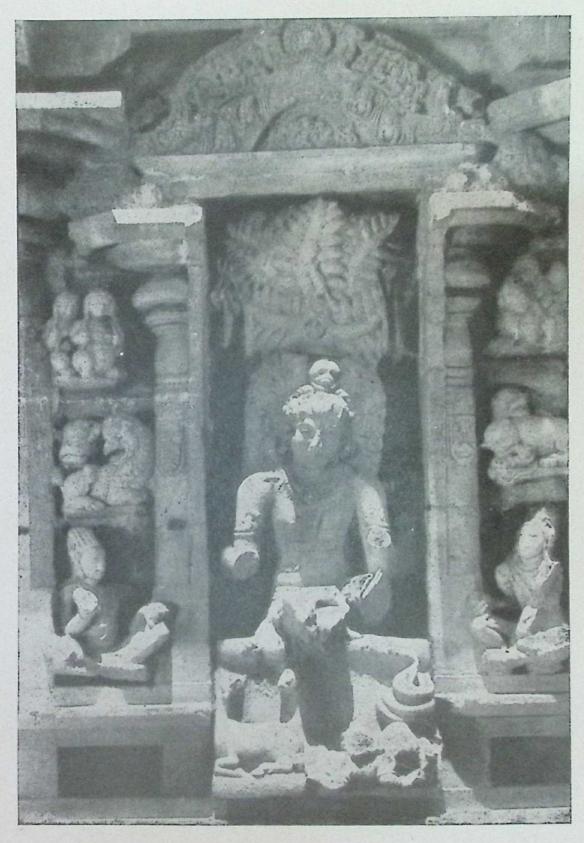


Fig. 89. Dakshināmūrti, Choļa, 10th century A.D., Srinivasanallur.



Fig. 90. Bhaisa Jāṭaka, Śuṅga, 2nd century B.C., Bhārhut, Indian Museum.

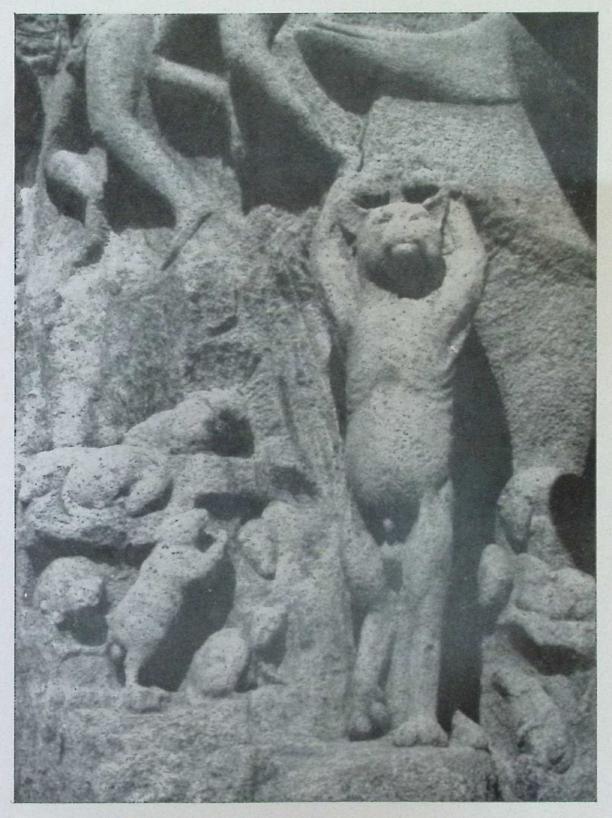


Fig. 91. The cat in penance, Pallava, 7th century A.D., Mahābalipuram.



Fig. 92. Šeshaśāyi Vishņu and the seven rishis as saukhaśāyanikas represented by one, Bhrigu, Hoysaļa, 12th century A.D., Belur.

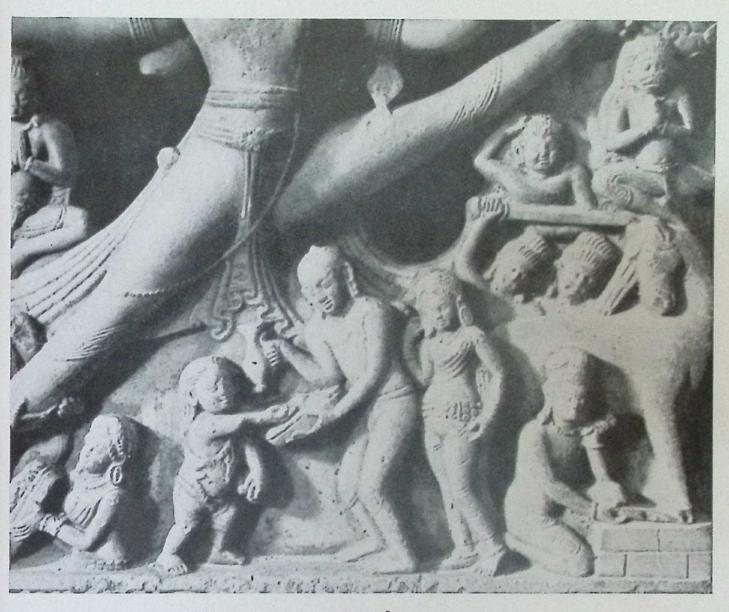


Fig. 93. Trivikrama-Vāmana, Bali and Śukra, 10th century A.D., Nepal.



Fig. 94. Garuda carrying Maniparvata, Śailendra, 11th century A.D., Angkor Vat, Cambodia.



Fig. 96. Moon and Rohini on lunar crescent, Gupta, 5th century A.D., Garhwa, Lucknow Museum.



Fig. 97. Bhārgavanandinī, Śrī Lakshmī Kushāna, 1st century A.D., Mathurā, National Museum.

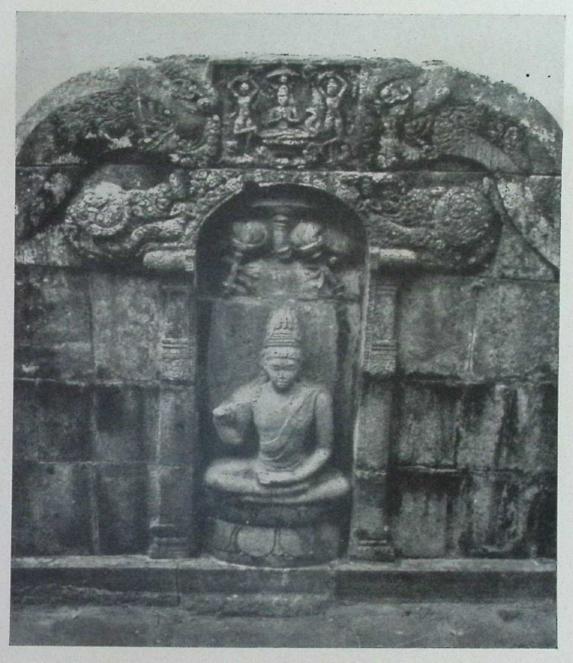


Fig. 98. Bhrigu, Pallava, 9th century A.D., Vishņu Temple, Uttaramerur.



Fig. 99. Kapila attacked by the Sāgaras, early Western Chāļukya, 8th century A.D., Paţţaḍakal.



Fig. 100. Face of Kapila on rear of Vaikuntha Vishnu, Utpala, 9th century A.D., Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Śrīnagar, Kāshmīr.



Fig. 101. Pulastya, 10th century A.D., Polonnaruvā, Śrī Lańkā.



Fig. 102. Pulastya, Early Pāṇḍya, 8th century A.D., Cave Temple, Tirukkolakkuḍi.



Fig. 103. Mātangī adored by Brahmā, Šiva, Vishņu and Indra, Bahsoli school, 18th century A.D., Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Šrīnagar, Kāshmīr.



Fig. 104. Marriage of Siva and Pārvat with Agni and Brahmā as witness. Gurjara Pratīhāra, 9th century A.D., Bhārat Kalā Bhavan Museum, Vārāņasī.



THE AUTHOR

The Book

The rishis have made the greatest contribution to the grandeur of dharma, the righteous mode of life, which was placed above every other concept in India. Rāma who is described even by his inveterate enemy Māricha as vigrahavān dharmah, embodiment of righteousness, assures Kaikeyi of his total disdain for material prosperity, comparing himself to rishis: viddhi mām rishibhis tulyam. They were selfless, sacrificing, simple, truthful, compassionate, restrained, embodiment of all virtues. No wonder celestials and demons alike adored them. The twelve forms of the solar deity, the lord of the celestial world itself, and the Almighty in dwarfish guise that grew in size to encompass the universe itself, all chose a sage, Kaśyapa, as their parent. The sages themselves were the holy progeny of immaculate Brahmā and in their turn became creators or Prajāpatis. Their penance achieved what even the mind could never conceive. Their simple hermitage was a haven of peace and tranquility where, following their example of love and amity, the opposites like the dove and hawk, deer and lion, mice and cat could come together unafraid. Miracles of birth, study, enlightenment and sacrifice characterise their life as a model to emulate; and an equally effective original commentary on this is provided by art in all its phases. In this book, a comparative study of both, enlivens the theme.